THE KENNEDY MYTH

AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION IN THE SIXTIES

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XUM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

PART I: THE BEGINNING

Chapter
I. CANDIDACY 20
II. INAUGURATION 54
III. KINGSHIP 71

PART II: THE MIDDLE

IV. CAMELOT 109
V. CONTEMPORER 141
VI. COSMOCRATOR 195

PART III: THE END

VII. ASSASSINATION 261
    #1. Dead 268
    #2. Descent Into Hell 289
    #3. The Third Day 345
VIII. MEMORIALIZATION 391
IX. SUCCESSION 451
CONCLUSION 572

APPENDICES 596
    Appendix A: Models for Phase Analysis (and table). . . 597
    Appendix B: Segmental Analysis of Grief Reactions. . . 603
    Errata 614
    List of Epigraphs 615
BIBLIOGRAPHY 617

XUM

INTRODUCTION

> Presidents . . . were and are luminous symbols in our history. We, too, the enlightened Americans, feel the need of myth and mystery in national life--of magic parchments like the Declaration of Independence, of shrines like Plymouth and the Alamo, of slogans like "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight!," of hymns like "America," of heroics like Pickett's charge, of heroes like John Paul Jones. . . . Magic may be reduced but never eliminated entirely from the processes by which free men are governed. . . . The final greatness of the Presidency lies in the truth that it is not just an office of incredible power but a breeding ground of indestructible myth.
>
> --Clinton Rossiter

The mythic significance of the Presidency should not surprise us. From time immemorial men have invested their leaders with a special significance and have expressed that significance, in oral tradition and later in written form, through myth. Modern American history has been no different. Attempts to secularize the state or to reduce the President to a "public official" have never been completely successful. Americans have always been devoted to their nation and its President. The settling of the new land was clothed in religious images and, at the founding of these United States of America, a unifying Presidency was established which, despite both puritan and republican sentiments to the contrary, took on the aura of sacred kingship. Washington father the nation, and Lincoln died for it. Presidents who follow in their train inherit the aura of their illustrious predecessors, regardless of their own personal character or political competence, as part of the mythic basis of the presidential office itself. And dying in office has regularly caused trauma in the populace, a clear index of the tremendous mythic significance of the Presidency.

The Kennedy myth is a particular contemporary example of this presidential myth. John Kennedy brought a special personal appeal, well-suited to the new electronic media of communication, into his presidential campaign (Chapter I), and he played his presidency with a distinctive royal flair, pragmatic finesse, and crisis-managing bravado which easily took on the colors of the Camelot, Contemporer, and Cosmocrator myths (Chapters IV, V, VI). But it was chiefly Kennedy's death in office which surfaced and intensified the age-old presidential myth and its precursors (Chapter III), leading to a retrospective idealization of Kennedy's presidency and casting a long shadow on the politics of the latter Sixties. Much more than the Inauguration, which ceremonially elevated Kennedy to the Presidency (Chapter II), Kennedy's death was experienced as a ritualized sacred time and as a mythic crisis of succession. The Kennedy assassination was such an unusually deep experience for most Americans that they found themselves refusing to face it through protest mechanisms (Chapter VII, #1), succumbing to their loss in grievous disorganization (Chapter VII, #2), pulling themselves back together through ceremonialized re-organization (Chapter VII, #3), perpetuating and archetypalizing the Kennedy myth through memorialization (Chapter VIII), and seeking a successor to Kennedy who would carry on what he had begun (Chapter IX).

Response to Kennedy's death had a religious dimension. The assassination was experienced as extraordinary (rather than 'everyday'), involved a 'shaking of the foundations' for many, touched human experience at some primordial level, spoke to our hopes and fears, revealed a primordial religious commitment to the political community focused on the President. Through the event, people were exposed to the beyond, experienced transcendence, encountered non-being and being in the depths of

XUM

life, confronted the senselessness of existence itself and were thrown into silent despair, found the terror of chaos brought to conscious proximity and were driven to a most solemn re-affirmation of sheltering symbols. In this frame, they attended church services and a televised funeral culminating a weekend monopoly of network television coverage focused on the significance of the man and the event. They lit and visited an eternal flame at Kennedy's grave in Arlington Cemetery and preserved his name in songs and buildings. They immortalized a man who was already a symbol of a new style of patriotism and leadership and the ideal of the twentieth century man, and they judged future presidential incumbents and aspirants by that image. They passed Kennedy's legislative program during a moratorium on partisanship, and, as turmoil clouded the country toward the end of the decade, they longed for a return to the spirit and style of his leadership and vision as they remembered it.

I

John Kennedy's death is the crux of the Kennedy myth, which colors the whole story. Memories which preceded it and hopes which followed it were transfigured by the religious experience which that death occasioned. The same kind of process occurred in the Jesus myth where the death-and-resurrection experience was read back into Jesus' life in the Gospel accounts and read forward into believers' lives through baptism and the Lord's Supper, making the "Christ of faith," remembered and hoped for, different from the "Jesus of history."[1] And just as some scholars have

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[1] This is a quick stab at a complex issue, but I think the analogy is useful. The Gospels record Jesus announcing his coming salvific death and run a transfiguration episode as a proto-resurrection experience. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus is both remembered ("Do this in remembrance of me") and hoped for ("Show forth the Lord's death till he comes") with an added sense of being made present in remembrance and in anticipation.

XUM

sought to peel the mythic accretions from the "real" Jesus, so others have tried to separate the "real" Kennedy from his myth. Though such a project has merit, it is not my intention to engage in it extensively. I will be telling the Kennedy story from a largely retrospective viewpoint, using sources contemporary with his life only as they have made it into the posthumous record.[1] For I wish to deal with the myth itself rather than with the "man behind the myth," paying considerable attention to the stages of myth development--as the myth took shape during Kennedy's life, was exalted by his death, and took on a life of its own in the aftermath[2]--but treating the myth mainly in its full-blown state. I choose to deal with rather than to dismantle the Kennedy myth because I believe it is essential for us to move into rather than away from a myth if we are to understand it in a way that is faithful to man's ancient wisdom, to analyze it in a way that is faithful to the latest trend in the social sciences, and to criticize it in a way that is faithful to our biblical theological heritage.

Man's most ancient wisdom came in the form of stories, and that medium was essential to the message borne. For stories cannot be translated into other forms without destroying their power to speak to the deeper levels of our being. Scuttle a story and you scuttle its peculiar kind of truth with it. Outlaw myth, says Paul Tillich, and you silence the experience of the holy which it nourishes.[3] Magnificent as man's painstaking achievement of conceptual thinking is, says Robert Bellah, his life grows impoverished without the continual refreshment of the earlier and more potent ikonic mode of expression.[1] Moreover, adds Harvey Cox, we are in danger not only of losing our stories but also of a "seduction of the spirit" in which abstract signals masquerade as stories, substituting images for icons.[2] Especially in politics, says Michael Novak, we must guard against being hoodwinked by the images which politicians contrive in order to manipulate us and be open instead to the genuine symbols, rooted in our history, which speak to a more fundamental level of our psyches and have the power to liberate and transform our own energies.[3] In a pluralistic society, writes Henry Fairlie, a broad consensus on explicit values is neither possible nor desirable; only a common culture based on common stories and a common history is able to give our society coherence and to restore to our lives, both individual and social, their essentially narrative quality.[4] John Kennedy's life and death and our reactions to both are now a part of our history and of the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves; the Kennedy assassination, in particular, was one of the most widely shared and unitive of our experiences in the twentieth century. It was a highly unusual, unsettling event, which--in order to be not merely strange but also revelatory--needed to be interpreted and preserved in a *story which expresses significance in a language sufficiently unusual to capture the unusual character of the event itself*, i.e., in a myth.

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[1] While the primary sources about Jesus come to us entirely in posthumous editions, a fascinating study could be made comparing contemporary and posthumous views of Kennedy. However, I have not chosen to do it here.

[2] Our story runs from John Kennedy's announcement of his presidential candidacy in 1960 to Edward Kennedy's debacle at Chappiquidick in 1969.

[3] Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (3 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-53), II, 152.

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[1] Robert Bellah, lectures in the Sociology of Religion, University of California at Berkeley, 1970.

[2] Harvey Cox, *The Seducation of the Spirit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), especially Preface and Chapter 10.

[3] Michael Novak, *Choosing Our King* (New York: MacMillan, 1974), pp. 16, 25, 251.

[4] Henry Fairlie, *The Kennedy Promise* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 236.

XUM

If, with Van Harvey, we see myth "not as a false story but as a highly selective story that is used to structure and convey the basic self-understandings of a person or a community,"[1] then it is precisely to myth that we must resort again--perhaps more self-consciously than the first time--in order to make full sense of the Kennedy experience which is ours.

In this task, the social sciences can help us, not to dissolve the myth, but to decipher it, to trace its ingredient archetypes, to assimilate it to wider patterns of coherence. Here again, the analysis must not try to take the place of the story but only to bring it out. The "new ethnomethodology," as I understand it, prescribes that one study a culture in its own terms, listening to its stories and to the significance its proponents find in them, before analyzing and evaluating it from an outsider's perspective. The social sciences were once more arrogant. Psychoanalysis began, Norman O. Brown tells us, in an attempt to dispel magic and madness but ended up finding that magic and madness are everywhere and that dreams is what we are made of.[2] The sociology of knowledge, according to Berger and Luckmann, exposed the pretension to an objective standpoint on human life as itself a myth and concluded that our very view of reality is a "social construction" designed to give our institutions a firm and meaningful mythic base and thereby keep chaos and formlessness at bay.[3] But the upshot of coming to grips with historical relativity does not mean suspending our critical faculties, but rather, contends H. Richard Niebuhr, recognizing the frame within which our reasoning does and must go on.[1] Myths are neither to be dismissed nor left alone--out of reverence or irrelevance--but to be fully understood with the help of all the tools at our command. The tools of scholarship, which were often intended to dispel the darkness of "unenlightened" thinking, have instead unlocked the significance of myth and left us neither with no magic nor with benighted magic but with a "conscious magic" which we both receive and shape. In a post-enlightenment and ecumenical age, we are capable of engaging in a "symbolic realism" which moves beyond both the credulous creeds of primitive fundamentalism and the incredible creedlessness of Enlightenment fundamentalism into a "second naivete" which is able to appreciate symbols precisely as symbols and to appropriate them from a variety of religious traditions, both ecclesiastical and civil.[2] From such a perspective, we can take on the Kennedy myth precisely and consciously as a myth, seeking what illumination it will yield without giving it a credence which fails to acknowledge our responsibility for what we do with it. Understanding the Kennedy myth with our eyes open will require not only retelling the story itself with the significance that only storytelling can bring out but also analyzing it with the tools of the social sciences drawn, in the present case, especially from classic studies in the sociology of religion and recent studies in civil religion.

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[1] Van Harvey, The Historian and the Believer (New York: MacMillan, 1966), p. 257.

[2] Norman O. Brown, Love's Body (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 254.

[3] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co, Inc., 1966).

Contemporary theology can also help us in evaluating the Kennedy myth. But here again, theology must first enter the world of myth and of

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[1] H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: MacMillan Company, 1941), Chapter 3.

[2] "Symbolic realism" is Bellah's term, based in part on Tillich's "belief-ful realism." "Second naivete" is borrowed from Paul Ricoeur. For a poetic statement of the possibility of reinhabiting symbolic homes, see Robert Bellah, "No Direction Home," in Search for the Sacred, ed. by Myron B. Bloy, Jr. (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), p. 64.

XUM

the historical events which it interprets, elucidating it from the inside out rather than pronouncing upon it from on high if it is to be faithful to the Biblical understanding of revelation.[1] For I contend that the myth-making process of divining religious significance in contemporary political history is the only responsible way to do theology on a biblical model. In contrast to the prevailing Greek-medieval abstract, contemplative, and otherworldly mode of theologizing, I advocate a more incarnational theology which deals with the flesh and blood of real events as grist for theological interpretation and a more prophetic theology that relates to what is happening now with a view to changing it culturally, socially, and politically. This is nothing new, but rather the original theological method in the Hebrew-Christian tradition, which is based not on an abstract treatise but on a collection of stories recorded in the Bible.[2] The Hebrews did not develop a religion and then apply it to the political realm, but their religion and their political history grew up together and were preserved together in Old Testament Sagen, which mythologized history "not by projecting myths into it but by making creative and interpretive responses to historical events."[3] The heart of the Jewish way and the crux of the life and teachings of Jesus is not abstract belief in God but faithfulness to God within the historical process--which the Bible amply illustrates both positively and negatively. The early Hebrews were not concerned about asserting that there is only one God but in seeing that Hebrews put no other gods before Yahweh in their allegiance and commitment, for it was he who guided their destiny as a nation.[1] And the early Christians were concerned to proclaim that Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord.[2] A political exodus is the center of the Old Testament, and a politically-motivated crucifixion is the epicenter of the New. Yet Christianity and Judaism have lost much of their political cutting edge, especially among those groups who claim, ironically, to adhere most firmly to the biblical tradition. Based on the unbiblical assumption that "religion and politics don't mix," religion has been loosed from its political moorings and politics set adrift from religious critique. Theologians alone cannot turn the people around into faithfulness, but they can at least take part in the counterattack by looking into the political arena where God has always been at work and examining the stories that people are telling about their kings today in light of the stories told of old.[3]

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[1] Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, op. cit.

[2] Cf. Harvey Cox, op. cit., p. 9. Much of contemporary theology is already moving in the direction I advocate.

[3] Van Harvey, op. cit., p. 258, following Buber. In other words, myth is read out of rather than into history.

Still, though we must first enter the world of myth and of comparative mythology, we need not end there. Neither contemporary nor ancient myths should be left uncriticized. For we live in a land of broken myths, broken both by the advance of human thought beyond the archaic world's unconscious mythologizing and, more essentially, by the transcendent's bursting the seams of every garment in which we try to clothe him. Yet broken myths need not be discarded but are all the more valuable in their broken condition, for they bring us closer to the divine than no myth at all without the pretension of capturing God which is rife in unbroken myths. In Tillich's words, myths must be "deliteralized" without being "demythologized" in a reductionist fashion.[1] Demythologizing assumes that we can experience God directly without the mediation of myth, that we can capture the transcendent power of God for ourselves unmuddled by earthen vessels, that we need no longer see through a glass darkly but can meet God face to face, that we can see God naked, so to speak, with no clothing whatever; it is a standpoint which takes account neither of man's finitude and historical relativity nor of God's historic self-revelation. Deliteralization, on the other hand, does not abandon the myths it breaks but finds greater meaning in them by refusing to take them literally. It recognizes that the power of myth lies precisely in its use of symbolic language, which says not what it says but points beyond its literal signification to a deeper or transcendent significance. It is silly to criticize myths because their language is symbolic; the crucial critical task is to decipher the meaning of a myth, to assess its ability to reveal that toward which it claims to point, and to size up its power for good or evil. If the Kennedy myth purports to structure and convey our basic national self-understanding, we are obliged to gauge the adequacy of that myth to carry that kind of weight and to plumb the depths to which it leads us for their demonic as well as divine shadings.[2] In the very limited fashion in which I myself am now engaged in this process, chiefly in the Introduction and the Conclusion of this thesis, it is Paul Tillich's scheme of heteronomy-autonomy-theonomy which provides my main tools for an explicit theological critique which roofs an edifice of sociological analysis which, in turn, rests upon the foundation of storytelling itself.[3]

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[1] Cf. Exodus 20:1-3.

[2] Cf. I Cor. 12:13.

[3] For storytelling as counterattack, cf. Cox, Seduction of the Spirit, p. 19.

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[1] Tillich, Systematic Theology, II, 152.

[2] Far from endorsing every spirit, scripture admonishes us to "test the spirits whether they be of God."

[3] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 85. See Introduction, #3 below.

II

This thesis is primarily an essay in the sociology of religion in the area of civil religion. Although they do not use the term "civil religion," I see Durkheim's classic study of primitive Australian religion, Weber's classic study of political authority and of charisma, and Troeltsch's classic study of the "compromises" reached between churches and states as studies in civil religion, and I freely use their insights in my study.[1] But the actual concept of civil religion and its application to the American scene is derived from Robert Bellah's seminal essay "Civil Religion in America."[2]

By "civil religion," I mean devotion to one's nation and its leaders as expressed in words (e.g., speeches, creeds, stories) and in deeds (e.g., ceremonies, wars, monuments). With Bellah, I wish to confine the term "civil religion" to the political sphere rather than extending it to all non-ecclesiastical forms of religion. I also agree with his placement of civil religion "alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches" insofar as this rightly stresses that the churches have no monopoly on religion and that civil religion is a religion in its own right and not merely a creature of the churches. It is high time, as Walt Whitman rhapsodized over a century ago, "to discharge the idea of Religion, in the United States, from mere ecclesiasticism" and, as Novak asserts, to broaden it to mean a "sense of reality, a way of structuring consciousness," including a "national self-understanding" as its civil form.[1] Nevertheless, we should not overlook the degree to which churches as well as governments (and the press and others) are involved in the origination and propogation of civil religion. Both the churches' reaching out for a political ethic and governments' reaching back for religious legitimation contribute to civil religion in my view.[2]

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[1] Cf. Emile Durkheim, Elementary Forms of the Religious Life; Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building, ed. by S. N. Eisenstadt; Reinhardt Bendix, Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait; Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches.

[2] Robert Bellah, Beyond Belief (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 168-189.

I distinguish three ideal types of civil religion: archaic, historic, and modern. With the inclusion of the primitive within the archaic type and the early modern within the historic type, my scheme parallels Robert Bellah's scheme of religious evolution. Following Bellah, I see the fusion of the divine with the earthly in archaic religion, the recognition of a transcendent divine in historic religion, and the virtual dismissal of divine transcendence in modern religion as the primary criterion also for distinguishing types of civil religion, corroborated secondarily by a correlation of the three types with Weber's traditional, charismatic, and legal types of political authority.[3] Although the purpose of the types is to analyze contemporary phenomena, I will sketch them out in terms of the eras in which each predominated in the process of defining them.

Archaic civil religion, which reigned from time immemorial and still retains considerable potency, identifies the divine with the state and its ruler, believes the king's command to be coterminous with the realm of salvation and order, and sees the authority to rule inherent in the blood royal hedged by tradition. Operating within a traditional authority system, the authority to rule and the customs delimiting and determining rule are inherited from predecessors. Whether operating in a clan or empire (or residually in a contemporary state), archaic civil religion is basically a tribal phenomenon functioning to sanctify the political community and acknowledging no universalistic higher authority which could challenge it. Specialized religious functionaries, if any, unquestioningly support the ancien régime in the archaic pattern,[1] to which revolutionaries also revert if they treat a revolution of the past as totally binding tradition. So absolute is the rule of tradition in archaic civil religion that even the king cannot deviate from it for long without undermining the source of his own authority. Breaking precedent is taboo, and the very idea of novelty is, as Eliade points out,[2] unthinkable and anathema to the archaic mentality.

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 106 (quoting Whitman's preface to the 1872 edition of Leaves of Grass) and pp. 12, 17. Novak's definition of civil religion as "public perception of our national experience, in the light of universal and transcendent claims... (p. 127)" has some merit, but applies only to historic civil religion.

[2] For the derivation of American civil religion from twin sources of puritanism and republicanism and for a comparison of the components of civil and ecclesiastical religion, see James Sellers, Public Ethics (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

[3] Robert Bellah, "Religious Evolution" in Beyond Belief, pp. 20-50.

Historic civil religion, which became dominant in the West with the ascendancy of Christianity,[3] sees the divine as standing transcendently over the nations in judgment and in mercy, recognizes only partial perfection and fulfillment on earth, and sees the authority to govern, regardless of how it is institutionalized, as a conditional gift of the divine hedged by revelation. Operating within a charismatic authority system, the authority to govern and the commandments delimiting and determining governance depend on a claim to revelation from a supramundane God. With its notions of a single

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[1] Not only cultic priests in ancient empires but also the non-professional old men in primitive clans and Orthodox priests in "Caesaro-Papist" tsarist Russia served only to legitimate the existing order, not to question.

[2] Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).

[3] For other examples of world-rejecting historic religion (Plato in Greece, Buddha in India, Taoism in China), see Robert Bellah, "Religious Evolution," p. 22. Only Christian and, to some degree, Greek notions of transcendence are directly relevant to Western political experience.

God, a supernatural salvation, and linear history proceeding from creation to consummation by divine plan, historic civil religion made universal religion, legitimate innovation, and prophetic criticism of government possible for the first time.

Although Biblical civil religion serves as a basis for most historic civil religion, it encompasses a variety of forms of leadership in the Old Testament--ranging from Gideon's inspired "judgeship" based on personal charisma to Solomon's dynastic kingship based on hereditary charisma--and a variety of attitudes toward government in the New Testament--ranging from Paul's endorsement of the "powers that be" to John of Patmos' condemnation of the Roman Empire as the whore of Babylon.[1] Furthermore, the Scriptures are consistent with--and have been selectively mined in order to justify--a variety of forms of compromise between Christianity and the political order worked out in the course of Christian history, of which the most potent have been, according to Troeltsch, the medieval Catholic compromise with barbaric German kingdoms and the Ascetic Protestant compromise with Anglo-American republics. Finally, using some Biblical motifs but rooted more firmly in the traditions of ancient Greece and Rome, there arises in the eighteenth century a republican stream which, in its more religious moments, looks to a rather Deist God as source of order, rights, and governmental authority and which has very little use for charisma except of a very attenuated institutional sort.[2]

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[1] Calling shofetim "judges" should not obscure their primary function as charismatic war leaders (who were occasionally called upon to exercise judicial functions); cf. Max Weber, Ancient Judaism. For the New Testament range, contrast Romans 13 and Revelations 13.

[2] Although both puritan and republican civil religion resist archaic pretensions (see Chapter III, below), the shallower rootage of republicanism in transcendence increases its vulnerability not only to archaic demagogues but even more to modern bureaucratic domination (Bendix, op. cit., 457).

In contrast, then, to archaic civil religion which rules by king and custom, historic civil religion has produced a great variety of forms: Old Testament prophets, elders, judges, and kings; New Testament attitudes of indifference, approval, and condemnation of the state; personal, hereditary, and institutional claims to charisma; Catholic, puritan, and lesser compromises in the history of Christendom; and at its fringe the republican tradition.[1] But the unifying characteristic in all these forms as they approach the historic civil religion type is their common recognition of a radically transcendent divine power as source of political authority.

Modern civil religion, which has predominated since the Enlightenment, virtually dismisses the divine, evades the question of ultimate fulfillment in its concentration on satisfying mundane interests, and delegates authority to administer to officials hedged by law. Operating within a legal authority system, the authority to administer and the laws delimiting and determining administration depend on the will of the people. Executive, legislative, and judicial officers of the state are accorded authority by virtue of their having been legally selected for office by election or appointment, and laws themselves are regarded as authoritative not because of any intrinsic merit or conformance to divine law but by sheer dint of the legitimacy of their mode of enactment. Theoretically, the people through their representatives can enact, execute, and enforce any laws they wish, and the citizen has no obligation beyond respecting the law and watching out for his own interests.[2]

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[1] In So Help Me God, Robert S. Alley lays out three types of civil religion which roughly parallel my republican, puritan, and Catholic traditions of historic civil religion; see Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 135.

[2] Despite utilitarian theories, neither life nor government has even been wholly directed by interests nor has modern civil religion ever held exclusive sway, but it has exalted private commercial interests.

Archaic, historic, and modern civil religion are not simply historically successive in predominance but also interwoven in American civil religion in general and in the Kennedy myth in particular. American civil religion was founded on two streams within historic civil religion, puritanism and republicanism, yet it has archaic and modern aspects as well, aspects which, as we shall see, are especially prominent in the Kennedy myth. It will be our prime analytic task to sort out these types of civil religion in our telling of the Kennedy story.

III

This sorting of types of civil religion through sociological analysis also provides the basis for theological criticism. From a Christian theological viewpoint, the rule of God (theonomy) is preferable to the repressive rule of others (heteronomy) and to arbitrary self-rule (autonomy), and therefore historic civil religion is preferable to archaic and modern civil religion. It might seem that Christian theology would favor historic civil religion out of a mere parochial self-interest since the "Christendom" period when Christianity was most socially dominant was also the period when the historic civil religion which it spawned predominated over other types,[1] but I make the argument also because I think that historic civil religion can deal most constructively and critically with myth.

In a heteronomous culture, which I identify with archaic religion, life is a 'one-possibility thing' and the reigning myths must be believed uncritically as they are promulgated (from tradition) by authorities who

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[1] As Troeltsch asserts, following Ranke, every era is equally close to God and must work out its own compromise in terms of current cultural conditions. Christendom often tended toward a heteronomy which I do not want back; post-Christendom retains a potential for theonomy.

XUM

reify them and use them directly and intentionally to domesticate the divine. Heteronomy believes its myths literally, brooks no addition to tradition, and denies the voluntary side of myth construction, and it lacks the critical distance from its own myths to be able to criticize them in relation to others.

In an autonomous culture, which I identify with modern religion, life is a multi-possibility thing marked by a surfeit of freedom with little sense of purpose, and men are cut off from the ground of their being and not allowed to examine the myths which might (or actually do) make life meaningful. Autonomy disbelieves myths literalistically, retains no sense of tradition by which to illuminate today's myths, and denies the necessary side of myth construction, and its great distance from all myths (including, unacknowledged, its own) precludes its discriminating critically among myths.

Only a theonomous culture, which I identify with historic religion, strikes a balance between order and freedom, between tradition and innovation, between grounding and venturing--in the light of transcendent purposes which both direct and lure it. It alone makes possible the free and serious entertainment of alternative myths and is able to go beyond the reified myths, which heteronomy accepts and autonomy rejects, to the symbolic meaning of myths which point beyond themselves. Only a theonomous perspective is able to engage in the constructive tasks of understanding myth as symbolic religious expression, of interpreting today's myths in the light of previous tradition, and of analyzing the psychological and sociological function of myth and in the critical task of evaluating the relative merits of a myth.[1] Only the theonomous stance of historic civil religion at its best is so rooted in transcendence that it is able to be genuinely self-critical, criticizing not only the fecundity of heteronomous archaism and the aridity of autonomous modernism but also the idolatrization of its own myths.[1]

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[1] Aided by a 'social construction' theory of myth which does not fixate on the "truth" or "falsity" of myth, both the voluntary and necessary sides of myth-making can be acknowledged from a theonomous view.

If there is a critical thesis within this thesis, its purpose would be to underscore the danger for civil religion in general and within the Kennedy myth in particular of combining strong doeses of conscious modernism and of unconscious archaism with very little of historic civil religion to counterbalance them.[2]

Finally, a personal word. It has taken me a long time to work through and assimilate the experience of the Kennedy assassination even though I was not overtly very affected by it at the time. I hope that this thesis can help others to work through their feelings about Kennedy, so that what is really valuable in the Kennedy myth may be taken up and lived out and what is dross discarded--without our having to keep making nostalgic visits to his grave, so to speak, because we were stuck with experiences we could not understand. You cannot argue with experience, much less repudiate it; the Kennedy saga is now our own story, ours to refine in memory and meaning as we work it through. Feel free to cry if your grief work has not been done; I did at several points. The Kennedy myth is a sad tale which reminds us of our own mortality shared even by those at the top. It is also a strange tale yet not so strange if we learn to live by myths which tell us who we are and may become rather than myths--so rife during the Kennedy years--that tell us who we might pretend to be.

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[1] According to Tillich (Systematic Theology, I, 39), the "Protestant principle" stands against every attempt to domesticate the divine, including especially the churches' own attempts to do so (cf. Amos 3:2).

[2] See the Conclusion, below.

PART I

THE BEGINNING

CHAPTER I

CANDIDACY

> Selection of a President has to be an act of faith. It becomes increasingly so as the business of government becomes ever more incomprehensible to the average voter. This faith isn't achieved by reason; it's achieved by charisma, by a feeling of trust that can't be argued or reasoned, but that comes across in those silences that surround the words. The words are important--but less for what they actually say than for the sense they convey, for the impression they give of the man himself, his hopes, his standards, his competence, his intelligence, his essential humanness, and the directions of history he represents.
>
> --Ray Price

These sentiments were penned in 1967 in a memorandum for Nixon's campaign staff, but they illuminate a symbolic aspect of presidential politics which has always been there and which today is a conscious part of the art of candidacy and has been for over a decade. With the aid of his public relations men and the acquiescence of the voters, much of John Kennedy's presidential campaign centered on the image he projected, the spirit he sought to engender, and the persona he put forth for the populace to put on. Whether--or in what sense--this approach was charismatic we will want to ponder.

I

"Tanned, rested, crisp, confident"--that is how Sorensen describes John Kennedy's announcement of his candidacy for the presidency on January 2, 1960.[1] Freshness seemed to typify his approach more than anything else; he sought to captivate voters with his toughness, intelligence, and

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[1] Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy (New York: Bantam Books, 1965), p. 138.

XUM

charm. "He projected an image of himself--tough but sophisticated, cerebral but unsqueemish, a dynamite combination of intelligence and strength," writes Suzannah Lessard, "as the image he would give the nation and the world."[1] And the image took. Said Cardinal Cushing in a eulogy, "I know of no one who has combined in more noble perfection the qualities of greatness that marked his cool calculating intelligence and his big brave bountiful heart."[2] Amherst President Calvin Plimpton likewise posthumously celebrated Kennedy's mental and physical and also emotional toughness:

> Kennedy was tough, not in the sense of ruthlessness or boorishness; rather tough in the sense of purpose, of mission, and of meaning business. Tough like a machine that had all the frills removed and is honed down hard for action--action in mind, in thought; in body. He had a certain leanness about him which I admired.... There was no softness about him.... He was physically lean, no extra flab or paunch around his middle. He was lean in words. His speech was no windy diatribe. And he was lean in personality. He was not a charmer, not smooth, no soft soap, no affectations.[3]

Several others affirmed Kennedy's physical hardiness and gave it symbolic value. Murray Kempton and Robert Lowell commended Kennedy's physical courage, masculinity, and toughness, seeing him as a "real hero" who would draw first--echoing the hero myth in television westerns.[4] Kennedy's showing stamina and courage in the celebrated PT-109 episode suring World War II,[5] his penchant for touch football, his love for sailing gave him a reputation as a sportsman, an athletic all-American boy who made good.

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[1] Suzannah Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead? A New Look at John Kennedy," Washington Monthly, III, No. 8 (October 1971), p. 10.

[2] Cited in Norbert Murray, Legacy of an Assassination (New York: Pro-People Press, 1964), p. 5.

[3] Cited in Melville Bell Grosvenor, "The Last Full Measure," National Geographic Magazine, March, 1964, p. 309.

[4] A. Alvarez, Under Pressure (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 101.

[5] In switching to Kennedy at the Democratic Convention, Lyndon Johnson announced, "Texas proudly casts its vote for the fighting sailor who wears the scars of battle."

XUM

Kennedy was "determined, unrelenting, and profane;" in him, "the will to command and the will to win were visible and unbeatable."[1] He was regarded as the personification of youth, health, confidence, and vigor, a "symbol of life and immortality."[2] Even more, with his mystique as a winner--"who moves through life in handsome style and never loses"--Kennedy was seen as a "healthy, happy symbol of the might and invulnerability of his nation."[3]

Kennedy's intelligence was a less celebrated virtue and was heavily shaded toward the analytic, distancing, and practical sides of reason by those who described it. Sorensen calls Kennedy an intellectual, but he points out that Kennedy's mind was "more critical and analytic than creative and better balanced by humor, practicality, and even profanity than that of the typical intellectual."[4] Burns saw Kennedy's loving to read, ruminate, and analyze, his absent-mindedness, detachment, and independence as qualities of the intellectual.[5] Likewise, Schlesinger stresses Kennedy's wit, self-criticism, and detachment and his tough-minded reason,[6] while Lessard praises Kennedy's "ability to admit that he was wrong, candor, capacity and willingness to grow, humor, tremendous intelligence, and the competence to execute the dictates of intelligence."[7] Fairlie, using Hof-

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[1] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1965), pp. 92, 63.

[2] United Press International, Four Days (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., 1964), p. 3; Wilbur Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," in The Kennedy Assassination and the American Public, ed. by Bradley S. Greenberg and Edwin B. Parker (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 3.

[3] Associated Press, The Torch Is Passed (N.p.: Associated Press, 1963), p. 7.

[4] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 433.

[5] James MacGregor Burns, John Kennedy: A Political Profile (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961) cited in Richard L. Strout, "The Cool Mr. Kennedy," New Republic, January 11, 1960, p. 16.

[6] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 618.

[7] Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead," p. 10.

XUM

stadter's distinction, credits Kennedy with a manipulative, adjustive, and practical intelligence, comparable to that of a good football coach, but not with a critical, creative, and contemplative intellect despite the misguided attempt by Kennedy partisans to portray him as an intellectual.[1]

Praise for Kennedy's intelligence easily shaded into appreciation for his sophistication. Norman Podhoretz noted Kennedy's enormous charm, wit, and cleverness but felt that his youth, his wealth, his beautiful wife, and his almost fairy-tale existence had more to do with making him a glamorous figure to the public than intellectuality.[2] Even Schlesinger tends to see him more as "civilized" than smart, exhibiting patrician Eastern-seaboard, Ivy League culture replete with cosmopolitan urbanity, courtesy, and grace.[3] "John Kennedy had that special grace of intellect," wrote Benjamin Bradlee, "which is known as taste."[4] Mary McGrory added in Kennedy's captivating handsomeness as well:

> He brought gaiety, glamor, and grace into the American political scene in a measure never known before. That lightsome tread, that debonair touch, that shock of chestnut hair, that beguiling grin, that shattering understatement.... He walked like a prince and he talked like a scholar. His humor brightened the life of the Republic.[5]

Kennedy was seen as an "absolutely charming man for whom all of us had this immense affection,...the darling of the population."[6] When the dust settles from re-evaluating Kennedy, this kind of image still remains: fondly, familiarly, "We still remember him smiling."[7]

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[1] Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, p. 225.

[2] Alvarez, *Under Pressure*, p. 100. [3] *Ibid*., p. 103.

[4] Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, p. 218.

[5] Grosvenor, "The Last Full Measure," p. 312.

[6] Murray Kempton in Alvarez, *Under Pressure*, p. 125; Eisenhower in William Manchester, *The Death of a President* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 16.

[7] Mary McGroryy in Grosvenor, "The Last Full Measure," p. 312.

This image of Kennedy--"debonair and brilliant and brave"[1]--is, to some degree, illusory and contrived. Perhaps, we can be forgiven for seeing Kennedy as the epitome of health despite a back ailment which prevented him from lifting and, at times, forced him to use crutches in private, for it took some courage to play the athlete for us in the face of pain.[2] Perhaps, we can also be excused for seeing Kennedy as an intellectual despite his shaky grades at Princeton and mediocre record at Harvard, for he did work hard to grow intellectually, read voraciously, and rattled off statistics incessantly.[3] Perhaps also, it is not necessary for a President to embody these virtues but only to advocate them, representing for us more than he actually is, heading up the cults of brawn and brains and seeing that they have ample play in his court, e.g., by ceremonially throwing out the first baseball of the professional season and advocating physical fitness or by giving intellectuals place in government and inviting them to dinner at the White House. These Kennedy did.[4]

But one defect of Kennedy's character, rooted in his very toughness and coolness, was brought to light, at least to the literate public, from the first in James MacGregor Burns' campaign biography: Kennedy's lack of intellectual passion and the courage of conviction: Kennedy was a "self-possessed New Englander, urbane and tough;"[1] he was neither personally nor publicly a man of passion (unlike his brother Robert). Personally, he had never been seen even by his mother in raging anger or uncontrollable tears, and those who knew him best confessed that they hardly knew him. Publicly, the cool Mr. Kennedy as Senator had been hard to distinguish from his colleagues on either side of the aisle. "He was not," writes Fairlie, "a man of keen moral perception."[2] He had approached McCarthyism with "nonchalance and minimal concern," seeing nothing wrong with it at first and finally supporting censure on legal rather than moral grounds, commitment to the civil liberties heritage (republican civil religion) not being part of his family tradition.[3] Kennedy was, in Schlesinger's phrase, "detached from the pieties of American liberalism" and had a hard time winning the support of the principled Stevensonian liberals whom he disparaged as "doctrinaire" (rather than pragmatic) liberals.[4] For Kennedy was not a liberal of "spontaneous visceral reactions" but by "intellectual analysis," which easily became instrumental to other purposes and provided no firm direction of its own.[5] Burns sensed in Kennedy a "certain dispassionate lack of commitment behind his driving ambition. Kennedy would bring bravery and wisdom to the White House. But would he also bring passion and power? That would depend on his making a commitment not only of mind but of heart, that until now he has never been required to make."[6]

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[1] A hero in one of Kennedy's favorite books, John Buchan's Pilgrim's Way, is characterized thus. Schlesinger sees Kennedy outgrowing such an ideal (A Thousand Days, pp. 88, 94). Fairlie sees it as fundamental (Kennedy Promise, p. 117). At any rate, his image did not grow beyond it.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 412. For Kennedy as an athlete, see "Sportsman Kennedy Emphasized Participation," New York Herald Tribune (Paris Edition), November 25, 1963 in The Kennedy Reader, ed. by Jay David (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1967), pp. 105-107.

[3] Penn Kimball, Bobby Kennedy and the New Politics (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 40.

[4] Kennedy had to practice baseball-throwing so as not to hurt his back. He called for fifty-mile hikes; Bobby Kennedy took one. For Kennedy's entertainment and use of intellectuals, see Chapter IV, #5, below.

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 55.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 76.

[3] Burns in Strout, "The Cool Mr. Kennedy," p. 16.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 91, 35. Cf. Chapter V, #3, below.

[5] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 79 (using Schlesinger's distinction).

[6] Burns in Strout, "The Cool Mr. Kennedy," p. 16.

John Kennedy's presidential campaign hardly surfaced the "latent" convictions that his official biographers insist seethed beneath his calm exterior. There was plenty of noble rhetoric but very little in solid commitments upon which Kennedy would feel compelled to stake himself once in office. Kennedy tended to tell us what he was not satisfied with and to pose himself as the one who could lead us out; he did not offer solutions to problems as much as inspire confidence in himself as tough enough and wise enough to tackle them manfully. Kennedy acknowledged that there were no important differences on issues between himself and Humphrey in their primary contest, only a difference in personalities.[1] And it was not much different with Kennedy and Nixon. The campaign raised no clear-cut issues; indeed, Kennedy deliberately gave issues a low priority in his single-minded drive for victory.[2] "Though there certainly were real differences of philosophy and ideas," wrote Theodore White, "rarely in American history has there been a political campaign that discussed issues less or clarified them less.... Specifics and issues had all but ceased to matter; only style was important."[3] Seeing no real differences between them, Eric Sevareid viewed both Kennedy and Nixon as "tidy, buttoned down men," the first completely packaged products of the managerial revolution; he saw both men as "sharp, ambitious, opportunistic, devoid of strong convictions and deep passions, with no commitment except to personal advancement."[4]

Kennedy's lack of passion and poor oratorical skills were liabilities at rallies, but his style was ideally suited to the new medium of television, which became, in the 1960 campaign, the main source of information on candidates (outdistancing press and periodicals two-to-one). Kennedy's "unadorned manner of delivery, his lack of gestures and dramatic inflections, his slightly shy but earnest charm, may all have been handicaps on the hustings," wrote Sorensen, "but they were exactly right for the living room."[1] As a cool candidate on the cool tube, Kennedy's very lack of fire, ironically, enhanced his image more than a more pointed message could. For "television by its nature is a medium of impressions rather than words," writes Penn Kimball, "and the tyranny of the clock reduces the number of ideas that can be effectively conveyed in a political telecast." Television communicates qualities of the person it shows quite independent of the words they speak or the situations in which they are pictured, reaching people at a subliminal level and giving them the illusion of "knowing" the candidate in a one-to-one relationship. It puts a premium on 'political style'--"the projection of an attitude toward people and public affairs rather than a detailed set of platform promises, an emphasis on personal character and charm rather than on specific programs."[2] The result of reliance on television coverage is a more extensive audience (including marginal voters) and a more superficial treatment--more people having less of political substance to go on and, what is more, not recognizing the lack of substance as they become captivated by political personalities. "As America's first effective TV President, Kennedy proved how important it was to be fast on his feet," writes Thomas Griffith, thus setting a "new standard that elevates flash over substance."[1]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 27.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 205; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 40.

[3] Cited in Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead?" p. 10.

[4] Cited in Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 67.

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 220.

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, pp. 15-16. Ray Price and Novak himself share this view of television's subliminal power: Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 45, 52, 76. For the creation of close bonds with Kennedy via television making his loss through assassination seem like the loss of a friend, see Chapter VII, #1A.

In the Great Debates of 1960, which directly reached two thirds of the U. S. adult population, Kennedy was brisk, in good humor, and in charge while Nixon was "hungry," nervous, and ill at ease, exuding very different "vibes" in terms of confidence and authority.[2] Kennedy's "youthful, clean-cut demeanor, candid, low-key approach, heroic war record,...decisiveness, information, and vigor"--in short, his 'dynamite combination of intelligence and strength'--worked their magic in the debates, especially among pivotal marginal voters while Nixon, by contrast, looked and sounded weak. With obvious partiality, Sorensen captures the essential contrast:

> Between the bleak gray walls and bright flood lights of the television studio, Nixon's gray suit and heavily powdered jowls looked flabby and pallid beside Kennedy's dark suit and healthy tan.... The preachy platitudes and dramatic gestures that had scored for him on the public platform seemed too pat and political in the living room next to Kennedy's fresh and forthright precision.[3]

With issues blurred, these factors proved decisive. "The public was more interested," concluded Katz and Feldman, "in the clash of personalities and in analyzing the character of the contestants than in the issues."[4] And on that basis, Kennedy won the debates, and, winning the debates, he narrowly won the election.

The 1960 presidential campaign was carried on, partly through the increased use of television, in a way that put a premium on images. Its concern with issues was minimal. As a result, it was in some sense more charismatic. All this is true, but it is not a fully adequate statement of the problem because the image-issue conflict masks a more basic question and because the kind of charisma involved is of extreme importance.

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[1] Thomas Griffith, "In Defense of Politicians: Do We Ask Too Much?" Time, January 27, 1975, p. 33.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 52, 76.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 91, 227, 225. Nixon's make-up was Lazy Shave.

[4] Elihu Katz and Jacob J. Feldman, "The Kennedy-Nixon Debates: A Survey of Surveys," cited by Orrin Klapp, Symbolic Leaders (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1964), p. 117.

Any notion that images can be dispensed with or that campaigns should concentrate only on issues is simply unrealistic. Politics is by its very nature imaginal or even, as Novak puts it, "liturgical." There is no way in which a politician can avoid having an image; even the iconoclast projects his being an iconoclast as part of his image![1] Politics, as Klapp points out, is inherently dramatic; even the most sincere politician plays a role on a very public stage, and there simply is no single true "imageless" view of a politician.[2] Questions about the degree of contrivance involved in particular candidates' image projection and about the choice of media in relation to their built-in or available capacity for distortion need to be raised,[3] but simple broadsides against images as such merely beg the question. On the other hand, the phrase, "the issues," is a code word for the concerns of a particular social and educational class; a politician who wants to maintain a good image with that group will adopt the symbolic posture of "taking stands on the issues," which, to a degree, Kennedy did, adopting "the clipped, precise style of the new pragmatists, rattling off statistics."[4] Surely, more statistics would not have tipped the balance. For the real malaise lay deeper than the emphasis on images and the lack of issues, deeper even than the use of "issues" to convey an image though this was an important part of it. It lay in an archaic use of images without transcendence and in a modernistic toying with issues without conviction to which Kennedy's peculiar combination of toughness and intelligence made him especially prone.

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 48, 51.

[2] Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 118

[3] For instance, Thomas Griffith rues that television disqualifies able but uncharismatic men, "In Defense of Politicians," p. 33. I agree that having a good television personality (which I do not equate with charisma) should not be a pre-requisite for the presidency.

[4] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 174, 67-68. Kennedy tried to court influential liberal intellectuals by a measure of issue-talk without alienating other classes or losing votes by taking specific stands on divisive issues (By gesture instead, a call to Mrs. King cost few white votes).

Kennedy's cult of toughness had archaic overtones. His single-minded drive for victory—in which nothing else counted much—is clearly archaic, identifying the interests of the self as of ultimate importance. It is almost as if Henry Clay's famous dictum—"I would rather be right than be President"—were stood on its head. What is more, the Kennedy drive to win, which Nancy Clinch calls "the Kennedy neurosis,"[1] was not only his own but also shared with the country as the winning Mr. Kennedy, concealing every ailment, became a symbol of the "might and invulnerability of his nation."[2] Now, no nation is invincible, much less invulnerable. Knowing this, historic religion recognizes the success of failure and the failure of success, the power of weakness and the weakness of power.[3] But archaic religion knows only the success of success, sweet to its lips, and the power of power. It can only meet defeat with sourness, humiliation, and disillusionment and therefore seeks to avoid defeat at all costs or to deny its reality when it comes. It projects its wish for an "all-American, shining, successful 'happiness'" into its symbolization of its leaders and develops a basically fraudulent kind of civil religion which denies the tragic side of life.[1] All this was packed from the first in Kennedy's archaic cult of winning, charm, and toughness, and we will see it unpacked in his quest for American military superiority, in his sabre-rattling inaugural address, in his stance as cosmocrator, etc.--and then finally put into question by the intractable tragedy of his death.

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[1] Nancy Gager Clinch, The Kennedy Neurosis (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, Publishers, 1973).

[2] Associated Press, The Torch Is Passed, p. 7. See Page 22, above.

[3] In Christianity, the cross is the central symbol of this recognition; cf. I Cor. 1. Judaism expresses this recognition in the Servant Songs (Isaiah 52-53) and in the whole notion of a God who can judge as well as aid his people. By breaking away from the archaic world and locating salvation apart from the health of the nation, Judaism could accept national reversals.

Kennedy's cult of intelligence was modernistic. It appealed to rationalists, who suppose, quite unrealistically on a Jeffersonian model, that political choice is a matter of intelligent deliberation and decision, the kind of people who would have liked to see more treatment of "the issues" (e.g., in the debates, which were actually designed not to clarify issues but to gain exposure for the underdog and score points).[2] But "government is not reason," as George Washington told us long ago; "it is not eloquence; it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." And reason alone is not very effective in taming fire, for it too easily becomes, as in Kennedy's case, its servant. The problem was not Kennedy's lack of rationalism but precisely the fact that he had arrived at his rationalistic liberalism by intellectual analysis rather than by gut conviction. The problem is that the cult of objective reason tends to disparage everything irrational (as many comments about the campaign being too "charismatic" reflect) rather than distinguishing and choosing between more healthy and less healthy potential irrational allies, thus leaving itself open at an unconscious level to some of the worst forms of irrationality--as happened with Kennedy when issues were demoted in favor of a single-minded drive to victory, when whatever idealism and rationalism he had became subservient to his archaic cult of toughness. For Kennedy to have been

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[1] Novak, *Choosing Our King*, p. 293.   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

XUM

more of an intellectual in Hofstadter's sense or even as much of an intellectual as his campaign image portrayed would not have helped; indeed, it would have gotten in the way of his being a good practical politician. What Kennedy needed--perhaps from outside himself--was the aid and critique of a deeper reason which had principles of its own, which could expose the paltry ends to which Kennedy and his brains-trust peers directed their tough-minded intelligence and ferret out the assumptions behind them. Even the "fifty-minute think" which James Reston proposed in place of fifty-mile hikes would not have helped unless an intellectual passion was brought to bear which was charily reflective and not merely reflexive in pursuit of active and unquestioned goals.[1] It never was.[2]

Kennedy's predominant archaic cult of toughness and subordinate modernistic cult of intelligence left little room for more historic virtues: the courage of conviction, deep wisdom, a passion for justice, enduring patience. The plethora of images in his 1960 presidential campaign misled us not because they were images but because they were unbroken images; we needed an iconoclasm which would not break and discard images but break and use them as broken symbols, which could point beyond themselves and liberate our energies for historic purposes.[3] The relative dearth of issues misled us not because more issues alone would have redeemed the campaign but because their absence was symptomatic of a deeper lack of historic goals. Kennedy's charisma misled us not because it was charisma but because it was so intimately tied up with himself and with ourselves as we imaged ourselves in him and carried very little of an historic mandate from on high,[1] which could judge as well as guide us. Kennedy's campaign was not wholly lacking in historic purposes, goals, and mandate any more than he was totally lacking in historic virtues, but, as we shall now see, the sense of 'national purpose' which Kennedy heavily injected into the campaign was largely archaic.

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[1] Cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 224-227, 181-185. Fairlie notes the Kennedy premium on brevity, alacrity, vitality, reckless physical bravery, brute stamina, activism and cites Buchan's notion "that the great things of the world are done by men who didn't stop to reflect on them."

[2] For the use of intelligence in the Kennedy administration, see Chapter IV, #5, below.

[3] Cf. Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 251, 16, 25. For Novak's distinction between images and symbols, see Introduction, #1 (Page 5, above).

II

"I believe that we Americans are ready to be called to greatness," Kennedy said in announcing his candidacy.[2] And Kennedy was more than ready to call them to it. After a period of purported lethargy, he sought to "get the country moving again," to revitalize the national will, to inspire a new spirit. Suzannah Lessard, paraphrasing her father's view, catches this spirit, together with its tough overtones:

> It was a different spirit. One knew that he was clever and a ruthless politician, but he was playing a big game in a big way and he had the guts and the nerve to be really actual about it. And he would have said he was wrong; there was a candor about it. One had the feeling that things would open up. He generated somehow a hope in the people which no other man who has run for President has since.[3]

Kennedy sought to galvanize a spirit of hope. "We are not here to curse the darkness but to light a candle,"[4] Kennedy said in accepting the Democratic nomination for President. "My call is to the young in heart, regardless of age, and to the stout in spirit, regardless of party," he added, seeking to universalize his appeal to all who might be stirred. After

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[1] Even the very immanentist Chinese had a notion of a "mandate of heaven" (Ming T'ien) by which present rulers could be judged against past.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 64.

[3] Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead?" p. 8.

[4] For Kennedy as a source of light, see Chapter VIII, #7.

"seven lean years" without intellectual ferment in which too many Americans had "lost their way, their will, and their sense of historic purpose," Kennedy proclaimed the beginning of a new era at a turning point in history.[1] Appealing to the example of the American "pioneers of old who gave up their safety, their comfort, and sometimes their lives to build a new world," burying their self-interest for the sake of a common cause, Kennedy beckoned his listeners to a "new frontier," which was not a "set of promises" but a "set of challenges," holding out "the promise of more sacrifice instead of more security." With the whole world waiting and watching, Kennedy put forward the contest between himself and Mr. Nixon as posing a choice "not merely between two men or two parties, but between the public interest and private comfort, between national greatness and national decline, between the fresh air of progress and the stale, dank atmosphere of "normalcy."'"[2]

A call to movement, sacrifice, and greatness could have been historic, reminiscent of the Hebrews leaving the fleshpots of Egypt in quest of a promised land or of Pilgrims leaving England to set up a holy commonwealth in the American wilderness, but with Kennedy it took an archaic and nationalistic twist, redolent of the American expansion across the continent exterminating all in their way, of "manifest destiny" and "America first." One could almost hear an echo of Melville:

> The rest of the nations will soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world, the advance guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things to break a new path in the New World.... Long enough have we debated whether, indeed, the political Messiah has come. But he has come in us.[3]

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[1] For Kennedy as a herald, or "contemperor," see Chapter V.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 188-189; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 64.

[3] Herman Melville, White Jacket (1850) cited by Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 127.

XUM

In a year that was ushered in, symbolically, by a New York Times report that "the Russians had now taken to referring to themselves as 'the greatest power on earth'--a proud vulgarity hitherto reserved for Americans alone,"[1] Kennedy reassured the American Legion that he would be out to satisy the old longing of Americans "not to be number one if, not number one and, not number one but, but number one period."[2] Kennedy aimed to stir up Americans' "simplistic, romantic longing to rally behind bold leadership, as if this were a wartime emergency with a simple, patriotically accepted goal to be personified in one man."[3]

Of course, no such emergency existed. But Russia's Sputnik program made it look powerful, and Kennedy drummed up a "missile gap" threatening American superiority.[4] He advocated a vigorous defense policy, predicted a decade of danger, and promised to "move forward to meet Communism," challenging the enemy in fields of our own choosing." "Our responsibility is to be the chief defender of freedom at a time when freedom is under attack all over the globe," Kennedy said during the final weeks of the campaign; "what is at stake in the election of 1960 is the preservation of freedom all around the globe. . . . . In this election the question is the preservation of civilization." With stakes so high, Kennedy was confident that Americans would deny their own interests for the sake of the common good in a kind of "voluntary totalitarianism," without which a democracy could not hope to compete with aggressive totalitarian regimes.[5] "I think the

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[1] Theodore White, The Making of the President 1960 (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1961), p. 451.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 113.

[3] Griffith, "In Defense of Politicians," p. 33.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 21-24. [5] Ibid., pp. 68, 70-75.

American people are willing to undergo whatever is necessary for the world's best defense," he said. "They want to know what is needed--they want to be led by their Commander-in-Chief." He reiterated the theme almost on the eve of the election: "I run for the Presidency in 1960 in the conviction that the people of this country are willing to sacrifice--to give--to spare no effort."[1]

But the American people were not so ready and willing. Although Norman Mailer asserted that the times cried out for a hero because "only a hero can capture the secret imagination of a people and be so good for the vitality of his nation," the times were not sufficiently disturbed to favor charismatic leadership.[2] Despite the attempt of Kennedy and his partisans to mythologize the "sugar-coated Eisenhower years" as a period of boredom, silence, tedious mediocrity, and utter lethargy "when nothing went wrong enough for revolution or right enough for celebration," few people were eager for change.[3] Despite Kennedy's call for a single united purpose needed for the long-term struggle between light and darkness, Kennedy found that political leadership simply cannot override the variety of people's choices in a free society when it is at peace.[4] The attempt to create a sense of crisis to which he could pose himself as saviour fell on rather deaf ears, and the continuing sense of prosperity and peace kept Kennedy's electoral margin slim.[1] Still transfixed by the narcosis of the Fifties, according to Sorensen, most people didn't want to be disturbed for the sake of a bold new thrust:

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 71, 83, 347. The theme continued into Kennedy's final speeches: proclaiming a new era, calling for sacrifice, carrying "our message of truth and freedom to the far corners of the earth," called by destiny to be "watchmen on the walls of world freedom."

[2] Norman Mailer, "Superman Comes to the Supermarket," cited in Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 40. For Newfield's application of this 'existential hero' motif to Robert Kennedy, see Chapter IX, #5, below. For the relation of charisma to turbulent times, see Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 126.

[3] Theodore Sorensen, The Kennedy Legacy (New York: New American Library, 1969), p. 43. Schlesinger predicted a resurgence of public interest; A Thousand Days, pp. 25, 570. Fairlie redeems the Fifties; op. cit., p. 24.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 112. Kennedy asserted that our society, power, and enthusiasm would tell "whether, in the long run, darkness of light overtakes the world;" Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 77.

> The political atmosphere was right in one sense for this kind of infusion of new intellectual currents but wrong in another. The drabness and complacency of the Eisenhower years had created among many a sense of tedium and indifference that seems hard to believe in today's turbulent times. Some observers with a more long-range perspective wondered aloud whether our nation had lost its spiritual vitality, its willingness to dare and to change, and whether it had a national purpose any longer without the benefit of President Eisenhower's committee to find one. The sterility and timidity of most government proposals, the prevalence of cliches in political speeches, the passivity of the young, and the pessimism of the poor seemed almost to be waiting for a clarion call to "get this country moving again."
>
> JFK provided it. But, in fact, not that many voters wanted to be moved. Not that many liked the thought of facing up to their responsibilities to our own poor, or to the developing nations, or to our blighted cities, or to world peace. Not that many welcomed so sudden a change from the quiet complacency and comfort to which the preceding eight years had accustomed them. John Kennedy's call to action, mild by the standards of 1968, when war and revolution threatened everywhere, was disturbingly loud to much of the electorate he sought to stir in 1960.[2]

Yet some were moved to march to Kennedy's martial music. A bare plurality (49.7% of the popular vote to Nixon's 49.6%) were moved enough to vote for him.[3] Throngs were moved to attend his rallies, to shake his hand, or even to get hysterical in his presence--jumping, screaming, seeking to touch him or leap upon him (including one fully-clothed woman who followed him into the ocean).[4] More calmly and persistently, several thousand were moved to work as volunteers in the Kennedy campaign. Kennedy set up a campaign organization outside the regular Democratic Party structure with campaign secretaries in each community whose appointment was based on personal loyalty to Kennedy and to the Kennedy family.[1] At the top of this organization, loyalty to Kennedy was boundless. "Like a fisher of men," Kennedy called his top aides away from jobs they already had to take posts in his campaign and later in his administration. These were the men who answered Kennedy's call to be the advance guard in the next act of the cosmic drama, who "put things like leisure, domestic happiness, and money-making behind them" and "espoused the State."[2] They saw themselves as a kind of extended Kennedy family with a keen sense of camaraderie, as a special elite--"we happy few, we band of brothers"--who had gone forth to battle whilst others slept.[3] As modern-day disciples, the "core of their discipline and their self-discipline was their single-minded, singlehearted commitment to their President. They were absolute in their devotion to him"--and absolutely devastated when death took their master from them.[4]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 115.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, pp. 53-54. Note how issue-oriented and concerned with historic goals Sorensen makes Kennedy appear.

[3] For official tabulations, see White, Making 1960, Appendix A.

[4] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 203; Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 207.

In contrast to hereditary succession on the basis of lineage and bureaucratic appointment on the basis of stated qualifications, there is always a charismatic element in a democratic election which allows the people to break all the rules and freely choose whom they will to be their leader.[5] It is not, in the American case, pure personal charisma, which arises outside of the existing system of authority and seeks to supplant it by an authority personally mediated (historic) or inherent (archaic),[1] and even in Kennedy's case—despite his proclamation of a new and dangerous era, despite his articulation of national purpose with frightfully little tie to historic purposes, despite his call to abandon selfish interests and follow his tough, intelligent leadership—Kennedy does not claim an authority based on personal charisma alone but rather a suitability, as a candidate, for the Presidency, which is to lend him an authority based on the charisma of office. And—although Kennedy promises to be a strong President who will exercise his powers to the Constitutional limit and a bit beyond and stresses his role as Commander-in-Chief (in which role Presidents have historically taken the greatest latitude in emergencies)[2]—the "voluntary totalitarianism" which Kennedy implicitly advocates is not the true totalitarianism of a Hitler supplanting the Weimar Republic nor is his aggrandizement of the presidential office the full imperialism of an Augustus Caesar subverting the Roman republic in the name of its restoration.[3]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 83.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 46, 115-119.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 287. This favorite quotation is from Shakespeare's Henry V. For Robert Kennedy's role in deputizing honorary Kennedys, see Victor Navasky, Kennedy Justice (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 115; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 291; White, Making 1960, p. 61. For devastation, see Chapters VII, #2E and IX, #1, below.

[5] For Weber's view of the role of charisma in modern elections, see Reinhard Bendix, Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 445-457.

Still, personal charisma was especially pronounced in Kennedy's presidential candidacy: it was pervasive in the reliance on images and a winning personality rather than on issues,[4] effective to various degrees in attracting a following, and very archaic. Kennedy's personal charisma

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[1] For the extraordinary character of personal charisma and its resistance to rules and routines, see Max Weber, Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building, ed. by S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), chs. 3 and 6.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 66-67. For another segment of this Kennedy speech to the National Press Club and Kennedy's failure to provide the promised strong, steady, controversial leadership, see Chapter V, #3.

[3] Cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 70. For the imperator role of the Presidency, see Chapter III, #4, below.

[4] See #1, above.

XUM

played a role in attracting voters, a greater role in provoking ecstatic responses, and an even greater role in creating dogged enthusiasm among his campaign workers.[1] The lack of deep concern for issues, the appeal to the stout in spirit across party lines and the avoidance of partisan domestic issues (in regard to which people might be tempted to consider their own interests), and the operation of the campaign largely outside the party machinery, all gave Kennedy's campaign a charismatic slant, based on an "appeal which was constricted neither by ideology, not by interest, nor by party, in which his personal leadership was without check."[2] The result was a bid for archaic leadership, confined externally by the Constitutional system in which Kennedy sought office, but internally confined by very little, not even by a sense of tradition, which hedges most archaic regimes (except for the most imperialistic). With Kennedy's top aides, the archaism was complete: total devotion, identification of the divine with the human. As in the religion of war, these men had a sense of sacrificial brotherhood rarely matched by the historic religions; as in the unquestioned theodicy of death in battle, they sought no justification for their commitment to Kennedy but seemed to gain succor from the battle itself irrespective of its ends.[3] The vague goal toward which Kennedy would move the nation in a new spirit was a very archaic pursuit of nationalistic interest, yet it was couched in a universalistic language, as in the code words "defending freedom," which enabled men more readily to submerge their own egos in the national ego.[4]

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[1] Although Fairlie reveals that the hysteria was encouraged (Kennedy Promise, p. 57), ecstasy and enthusiasm are still charismatic-religious.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 80.

[3] For the religion of war vs. historic religion, see Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 335-336.

[4] Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 93.

III

"The election of a president is an almost religious task," writes Michael Novak; "it intimately affects the life of the spirit, our identity. Who the man is determines in real measure who we are." Whether he liked it or not--and despite the Constitution's ban on religious requirements for public office--Kennedy was "running for a religious office" and had to submit to a religious test.[1] It was not enough for Kennedy's image to attract or his spirit to inspire. If the people were going to submerge their egos in the national ego through his intermediacy, if they were going to depend on him to define their heritage and their present situation, if they were going to rely on him for protection, if they were going to entrust him with their power[2]--then he would have to prove himself worthy of their trust. If he was going to be themselves writ large, the personification of their national self, their own persona, then the people would have to try him out and try him on. The presidential campaign would be the means by which they would test his grace under pressure, the "High Noon" that would reveal his true colors, the moment of truth that would demonstrate his capacity to turn them on and revive their spirits and, reciprocally, his own.[3] Writes Novak:

> The psychic power inherent in the president's office derived directly from the people. The president is obliged to make ritual pilgrimages among them--to touch them, to "press the flesh " as Lyndon Johnson put it--to complete the electric circuit of his symbolic connection with them. . . . A campaign is a symbolic "long march," a rite de passage, an agon, a blood rite. The candidate suffers for the people's sake. They select which candidate has most united himself to them.[4]

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 4, 108.

[2] These are the symbolic roles of sacred kingship; see Chapter III.

[3] Cf. Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 164, 235. As with her late husband, Eleanor Roosevelt felt that "Kennedy's intelligence and courage elicit emotions from his crowds which flow back to him and sustain and strengthen him;" Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 78.

[4] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 41.

XUM

The urge to merge with Kennedy was strong, but there were some ways in which Kennedy was different from a majority of Americans. The people would have to sort them out. A key "issue" in Kennedy's candidacy was a representative one: Could this rich, young, Catholic represent all of the American people in their highest office?

The youth and wealth issues were easily neutralized and even turned to Kennedy's advantage. The youth issue, raised by Truman shortly before the Democratic National Convention, was met by Kennedy's citing his fourteen years of experience in Congress and his similarity in age to Jefferson, Washington, Madison, and Columbus (Jesus was dropped from the list before the speech) and by an assertion of his readiness quoting Lincoln:

> Mr. Truman asks me if I think I am ready. And I am reminded that one hundred years ago Abraham Lincoln, not yet President and under fire from the veteran politicians, wrote these words: "I see the storm coming and I know his hand is in it. If he has a place and work for me, I believe that I am ready." Today I say to you that if the people of this nation select me to be their President, I believe that I am ready.[1]

This issue cropped up again in Nixon's charge that Kennedy lacked executive experience, but Kennedy's superior performance and sense of command--his exhibition of toughness and intelligence--in the debates put that issue to rest.[2] The wealth issue reared up for a time in West Virginia, but Kennedy demonstrated enough concern for poverty and grasped local situations so well that he won the primary over Hubert Humphrey despite his wealth.[3] The humble origins of the Kennedy family, their large size, their sufferings and setbacks and John Kennedy's own realism, toughness, and reliability led working-class people to identify with Kennedy and his family; after years of Protestant Brahmins in the presidency, millions of working people felt, at last, that they had a chance to be symbolically represented in Kennedy.[1] Ironically, the Kennedys could represent both who they were and who they wished to be; they were "both themselves and more than themselves." The Kennedy family "had begun with no advantages, yet they already seemed born to rule;" they had 'made it'; they were the American dream come true. "The craving of the American people to be governed by men who are both Everyman and better than Everyman could hardly have been better satisfied,"[2] concludes Fairlie. Kennedy was, in Mailer's phrase, Superman come to the supermarket, divinity in our midst. "Hands were stretched toward him over wire fences at airports like hands extended toward medieval sovereigns or ancient prophets, arousing waves of power, being, and superior reality—as if he were a witness from another world bringing cure and heightened life."[3] Crowds developed a gay possessiveness about Kennedy, calling him by his nickname and gaining an easy familiarity with him. They identified with him as young, athletic, raising a family, giving parties, and, while there was a certain remoteness that gave him dignity—he lived on the hill—there was also an accessibility since he shook hands at the supermarket; a fellow came to feel he almost knew them personally.[4] Kennedy was close enough to be their friend yet enough superior to them that they could derive vicarious satisfaction from their identification with him.[5] Young and rich—and even superb in his extraordinary excellences—Kennedy was as the people themselves wished to be and were in him.

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 172-173. Note how Kennedy uses the danger theme but substitutes a mandate from the people for Lincoln's historic God.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 71.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 28, 158.

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 90-91.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 53.

[3] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 5 (Quotation altered and re-arranged).

[4] Associated Press, The Torch Is Passed, p. 7.

[5] For Kennedy as representative and king, see Chapter III, #2 and #5.

The Catholic issue was not so easily dispensed with and kept haunting Kennedy throughout the campaign. Even before the campaign officially began, Kennedy made efforts to dispose of the issue by stressing his independence as a Senator from the legislative positions espoused by the Catholic Church and by emphasizing—over against the still-prevalent Catholic preference for union of church and state[1]—his own belief in pluralism and his immunity from papal influence. "We live in a liberal democratic society," he wrote a Colorado woman in 1959, "which embraces a wide variety of belief and disbelief. There is no doubt in my mind that the pluralism which has developed under our Constitution—providing as it does a framework in which diverse opinions can exist side by side and by their interaction enrich the whole—is the most ideal system yet devised by man." To James MacGregor Burns, he said, "My faith is a personal matter and it is impossible that my obligation as one sworn to uphold and defend the Constitution could be changed in any manner by anything the Pope could say or do." Later, he reiterated that as a public official he had "no obligation to any private institution, religious or otherwise," would not be "responsive to ecclesiastical pressures or obligations of any kind that might influence or interfere with (his) conduct of the office in the national interest," and would be "guided by his conscience and be completely independent of direction from the Pope or any other church official." Finally, in a widely-read article in *Look* magazine on March 3, 1959, Kennedy asserted quite modernistically, "Whatever one's religion in his private life may be, for the office-holder nothing takes precedence over his oath to uphold the Constitution and all its parts—including the First Amendment and strict separation of church and state."[1]

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[1] Lawrence H. Fuchs, *John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism* (New York: Meredith Press, 1967), pp. 163-167, 208-210.

XUM

Still, the Catholic issue would not die. Kennedy had hoped to sidestep the issue in West Virginia by emphasizing his war record and patriotism (his American religion) but found he had to face the issue. He faced opposition not only from the "low-church" tradition of Southern and Midwestern Protestant evangelicals but also from some closer to the ranks of the "high-church" Northeastern Protestant establishment, such as Norman Vincent Peale, who said, "It is a good thing to have this crisis forced upon us; it will bring us together. . . . Our American culture is at stake."[1] Kennedy fought back by reiterating his position on separation of church and state; by asserting that he could, as President, attend Protestant funerals and other services; by joking, as always, about prelates; by getting some Protestant clergy to criticize other Protestant clergy for bigotry; and by giving a much re-used televized address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, which, according to Schlesinger, knocked the religious issue out of the campaign as an intellectually respectable issue.[2]

But Kennedy found that more than anti-Catholic prejudice or fears of a Vatican take-over were involved in the so-called "religious issue;" it required people to consider and reconsider the symbolic requirements for representative implicit in the presidential myth. Writes Sorensen:

> Kennedy discovered a widely and deeply held belief that the United States, because it is predominantly Protestant in church membership, is traditionally and even semi-officially a Protestant nation--and that the President, as spokesman, symbol, and leader of the nation, is expected to attend a Protestant church.[3]

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[1] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 178.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 70. In other words, it ended overt high-church opposition. For the distinction between high-church and low church traditions, see Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 131.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 124.

To elect Kennedy required an overdue change in the nation's self-conception from thinking of itself as a Protestant nation to accepting its religious pluralism. That change was not easy. But when the election came, enough Democrats decided that it was all right to vote for a Catholic after all to swing the election for Kennedy. That narrow victory, coupled with Kennedy's pronouncements on church and state and his conduct in office, spelled the permanent demise, Sorensen asserts, of the so-called "religious issue" in presidential politics:

> Today that issue seems surprisingly remote because of JFK. What he said at Houston, and earlier to the nation's editors, on the complete and rational separation of church and state--as applied to all religious groups--is an important part of the Kennedy legacy. But equally important is what he did in winning the understanding of previously prejudiced Protestants, in winning the election and thereby shattering religious barriers to the White House, and in conducting the Presidency in such a manner as to disprove all lingering doubts about a Catholic President's independence from the Vatican's position on legislative issues.[1]

Even more significantly, according to Novak, Kennedy "opened up America beyond merely Protestant symbols" into a broader pluralism, which fully included Catholics, and a deeper heritage, which could include a Celtic-Catholic "Camelot." "The sudden, brilliant symbolic confluence of 'the two Johns'--(Pope) John XXIII and John Kennedy--exploded Catholic awareness and Catholic energy into every sector of social and political life." With Kennedy as both symbol and catalyst of the change, "the 1960's were a time of unparalleled Catholic influence in American politics and culture."[2]

Yet the irony is that America's first "Catholic President" was not very Catholic and was probably more shielded from Catholic influence than most Protestant presidents.[1] After the "representative issue" is dealt with—with all its important symbolic ramifications—the real "religious issue" still remains: Kennedy's lack of an operant historic civil religion, Catholic or otherwise. The fact is that, except for his affiliation and regularity in ritual observances,[2] Kennedy was not much of a Catholic. Kennedy "wore his religion lightly," said Cardinal Cashing; "he was not a very religious man."[3] As a youth, Kennedy showed no special interest in Catholicism, preferring assertive individualistic virtues, as celebrated in the poem "Invictus", to the Catholic virtues of piety and obedience.[4] He spent only one year in a Catholic preparatory school—and that taught by laymen—and then went on to Episcopal-related Choate and to Harvard, after which he quipped, "It's hard for a Harvard man to answer questions in theology." Indeed, according to Sorensen, Kennedy didn't care a whit about theology. He had no doubt that Kennedy believed in God and no reason to believe that he did not accept Catholic dogma in faith and morals although he kept his opinion to himself; in the eleven years of their intimate association, Kennedy never discussed his personal views of man's relation to God.[5] Sorensen likes to look on Kennedy as an idealist, but, after noting that Kennedy had no "guiding principle," he comes up with nothing more as the Kennedy legacy than vague beliefs in peaceful revolution, in free choice, and in responsibility for the future of our children.[1] Likewise, Schlesinger admits that Kennedy hated to declare his idealism and portrayed him as a man who espoused the importance of a moral code for a politician and of religious convictions for a nation's people, but whose own intelligence was fundamentally secular with little organic connection between his church-religious faith and his politics.[2] "There is an old saying in Boston," Kennedy had said back in 1947, "that we get our religion from Rome and our politics from home." Kennedy displayed a remarkably candid irreverence toward ecclesiastical authorities and did not believe that priests had any special competence in public affairs. When a priest asked, "Do you believe all law comes from God?" Kennedy replied, "I'm a Catholic, so of course I believe it--but that has nothing to do with international law," thus indicating not only his independence from priests but also the isolation of his taken-for-granted religious faith from political relevance.[3] Though White saw Kennedy's religion like that of Western European intellectuals, bent on mercy through poliitcs,[4] Schlesinger depicts him as a born Catholic with no interest in theology, who distanced himself from both popular and intellectual Catholicism, paid no heed to Vatican doubts about his view of church and state leaving them too unrelated, and showed that "there need be no conflict between Catholicism and modernity"--if there is no relation between them.[5]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 53.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 114, 140, 90. Cf. also Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 235. For the 'two Johns,' see Garry Wills, Bare Ruined Choirs (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972).

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[1] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 183. Of course, politically, Protestant presidents needed to court the Catholic vote while Kennedy could count on it and could afford, for instance, to include birth control information with foreign aid while Eisenhower could not.

[2] Although Mass attendance may have been considered all that was necessary to be a good Catholic then, requirements have since deepened.

[3] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, pp. 164, 206.

[4] Ibid., p. 204. The poem's final couplet is: "I am the master of my fate/ I am the captain of my soul."

[5] Ibid., pp. 164, 204, 207.

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, pp. 205-207.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 105-106. Cf. John F. Kennedy, The Faith of JFK, ed. by T. S. Settle (New York: Dutton, 1965), p. 108.

[3] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, pp. 164, 208.

[4] Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1964 (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1965), p. 33.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 105-107.

Several religious critics rued the disjunction of historic religion from politics in Kennedy's modernistic civil religion, especially as it was put forth in his Look article.[1] Martin Marty called him "spiritually rootless and almost disturbingly secular."[2] An editorial and a letter in the Christian Century criticized Kennedy's position by citing Catholic warnings against secularism and polytheism becoming America's official creed.[3] Likewise, Bishop Pike sees Kennedy in his Look statement coming off too little Catholic rather than too much: "Strangely enough, Senator Kennedy's statement, far from posing the threat of ecclesiastical tyranny, would seem rather to represent the view of a thoroughgoing secularist who really believes that a man's religion and decision-making can be kept in watertight compartments."[4] Paraphrasing Kennedy's statement as "Religion is personal, politics is public, and the twain need never meet and conflict," Robert MacAfee Brown scores Kennedy's assumption that religion is a private affair with no relationship to the holding of public office and criticizes Kennedy for denying his faith and declaring it to be a sheer irrelevancy.[5]

More disturbing to Brown than indifference to religion was the spectre of totalitarianism implied in Kennedy's saying that nothing takes precedence over his oath. "The elevation of the state to the pinnacle of a totally uncritical adulation," asserts Brown, "is the seedbed in which the plant of totalitarianism flourishes and grows."[6] In the same vein,

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[1] Look, March 3, 1959; see Page 44, above.

[2] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 168.

[3] Editorial, Christian Century, March 4, 1959, p. 251; Letter by Rene de Visme Williamson, Christian Century, April 1, 1959, p. 394.

[4] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 168.

[5] Robert MacAfee Brown, "Senator Kennedy's Statement," Christianity and Crisis, XXX, No. 4 (March 16, 1959), pp. 25-26.

[6] Ibid.

Rene de Visme Williamson asserts:

> No Christian, regardless of his occupation or office, can say that nothing takes precedence over his allegiance to his country because that would constitute a violation of the first commandment. The historic Christian position has always been one of adherence to a higher law. . . . Senator Kennedy's position is sheer totalitarianism (though I am sure he does not intend it to be) because it makes the Christian a prisoner of whatever social order or political system he happens to be a member of, be it capitalist or socialist, democratic or communist, liberal or fascist.[1]

"Kennedy concedes far too much," concludes Brown. "In his effort to assure his possible constituency that he is a regular American, he has succeeded in demonstrating that he is a rather irregular Christian," for, from a Christian standpoint that contrasts with Kennedy's position, "the state cannot command the Christian's total and unqualified loyalty even if the state be the United States."[2]

The end of the "religious issue" puts us back where we started: with voluntary totalitarianism and messianic Ammericanism and no limits to the sway of the state.[3] Unlike Harold MacMillan, who said, "If the people want a sense of purpose, they should get it from their archbishops,"[4] Kennedy sought to supply a sense of national purpose himself apart from any an historic civil religion, Catholic, puritan, or republican. Schlesinger attempts to construe these "detachments" positively:

> Kennedy's detachment from traditional American Catholicism was part of the set of detachments—detachment from middle-class parochialism, detachment from the business ethos, detachment from ritualistic liberalism—which gave his perceptions their peculair coolness, freshness, and freedom and which led those expecting commitments of a more familiar sort to condemn him as uncommitted. In fact, he was intensely committed to a vision of America and the world and committed with equal intensity to the use of reason and power to achieve that vision.[5]

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[1] Williamson, Letter, Christian Century, April 1, 1959, p. 394.

[2] Brown, "Senator Kennedy's Statement," p. 26.

[3] See #2, above.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 9.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 107.

XUM

Schlesinger also depicts Kennedy and his New Frontiersmen as grim and laconic compared to the more evangelistic and moralistic New Dealers, doing things because they were rational and necessary rather than because they were just and right.[1] Yet the contrast is not complete. Kennedy and his men were more modernistic than their more historic counterparts in the Thirties; yet they were certainly not uncommitted; they were, in their own way, evangelical about an archaic vision of America--in which power kept trouncing reason in the absense of historic conviction--and totally devoted to Kennedy as its embodiment and harbinger.[2] There was also a modernistic strain in this vision as it merged with the general American vision, which saw freedom as opportunity for private gain, postulated infinite potential for moral growth, and worshiped individualism and the self-made man, and there was room in it for a no longer historic, "Arminian" God who helps those who help themselves, blesses Americans with the opportunity for freedom and prosperity by putting the good life within the grasp of energetic and independent men, and commissions America to fulfill the world's hopes by promoting freedom as her special destiny.[3] Kennedy's official religion was so inoperative and his real religion so like their own--and pursued with such archaic zeal--that most Americans decided that Kennedy did represent them after all, despite his Catholicism. Kennedy was a special hero in America, concludes Fuchs, "because he eloquently articulated and dramatically exemplified its dominant values: personal independence and achievement; American mission; and belief in a benevolent God who looks favorably on the New Zion of the United States of America."[4]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 200.

[2] Fairlie sees the contradiction between the (modernistic) coolness of the Kennedys and their (archaic) zeal as their basic fault; op. cit., p. 5.

[3] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Cathalicism, pp. 218-223.

[4] Ibid., p. 189.

The regularity of Kennedy's Americanism, as he had hoped even in West Virginia, tended, in the end, to obscure the irregularity of his Christianity. Even as astute an observer as Novak asserts that "Kennedy could move comfortably within the symbols of the civil religion without either surrendering his Catholicism or making it offensively obtrusive."[1] And Nicholas Schneider, on the basis of Kennedy's speeches, puts him forward as a model American and Christian in a way that all too obviously equates them:

> Kennedy's references to religion reveal a man having a firm faith in God and his country, a deep trust in Divine Providence and the future of mankind, and a sincere love for all men expressing itself in a willingness to involve himself with their problems anywhere on the globe. . . . That is why he stands as an exemplar of the genuine American and the genuine Christian in the twentieth century.[2]

Yet a Christianity which can move comfortably and unobtrusively among the symbols of a nationalistic civil religion and identify itself with the national character bears little resemblance to historic Christian faith and is, indeed, archaic, divinely legitimating and never judging or "interfering" with the conduct of government.

Kennedy's insulation from his Catholic religion, added on to the lack of constraint from ideology, interest, or party, left him all the more without check and all the more acceptable to the voters. Despite his lack of moral passion, Kennedy was tough and intelligent; he projected a good image; he was eloquent in defense of a national purpose which sacrificially ennobled and exalted America; his youth and wealth were, after all, attractive, and his religion left no stigma. What more could Americans want than a candidate who so well mirrored their own dreams? On November 8, 1960, they elected him President by a miniscule margin. The election legitimated

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 141.

[2] Nicholas Schneider, Preface to Religious Views of President John F. Kennedy in His Own Words (St. Louis: Herder, 1965), p. viii.

Kennedy's *personal charisma*, on which he had relied so heavily in the campaign, and it would be soon joined by the *charisma of office* of the presidency, confirmed by the inaugural ceremony, only to be later trasmuted into a *mythic charisma* by Kennedy's death and subsequently drawn upon by his brother Robert as a kind of *hereditary charisma* underlying his claim to be Kennedy's true heir. A Kennedy magic--largely archaic, somewhat modernistic, minimally historic--had been loosed upon the world in the campaign of 1960, and it would grow and grow and grow.

XUM

CHAPTER II

INAUGURATION

> America has no more solemn rite than the inauguration of a President. Every four years since 1789, the austere ceremony has suspended the passions of politics to permit an interlude of national reunion. . . . Putting doubts and disagreements aside, the nation listens for a moment as one people to the words of the man whom they have chosen for the highest office in the land.
>
> --Arthur Schlesinger

A presidential inauguration is, as Kennedy wrote in an earlier draft of his Inaugural Address, "the sacrament of democracy,"[1] a key civil-religious celebration in which the nation's sacred values are re-affirmed and its sacred king crowned. Like a coronation, the inaugural ceremony transfers the charisma of office to the new President, provides religious legitimation for his authority, and invests him with symbolic as well as instrumental roles. Like primitive totemic festivals or imperial new year celebrations or Biblical covenant-renewal liturgies, the inauguration provides an occasion for the whole people to unite themselves in rededication to the nation's ideals as they are articulated by the new President as high priest.[2]

This is far from evident on the surface. Compared to the pomp, ceremony, and age-old formulae attending the coronation of the British king, which make clear the majesty and dignity (hereditary charisma) with which he is being invested, the American inaugural ceremony is spare indeed and

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[1] Sorensen, _Kennedy_, p. 271. The overtones of "sacrament" are too ecclesiastical, too Catholic for Kennedy to use it. Yet his being Catholic "heightened the nation's sense of liturgy;" Novak, _Choosing Our King_, p. 20.

[2] For the symbolic roles of the President as high priest, representative, father, and imperator, see Chapter III, below.

XUM

its mythology legalistic. Our puritan and republican forefathers, sharing a common abhorrence of ritual for different reasons, deliberately designed it so. Against all pretensions to kingship, they saw the president as merely an office-holder and his inauguration as merely the commencement of the execution of his duties as a faithful public servant.[1] But this deritualization was not wholly effective, for even the barest ceremony can freight great commitment. As Verba warns us, "The absence of ritual in American politics, the absence of an aristocratic or monarchic tradition, and the self-conscious secularization of political life may obscure the extent to which political commitment in the United States contains a prime component of primordial religious commitment."[2] Purely rational elements are involved in our government, to be sure, and in greater measure than in traditional societies; the President's authority is more rational than charismatic or traditional, more modern than historic or archaic. Yet all are involved, and the inauguration transfers traditional and charismatic authority along with ostensible legal authority.[3] Despite the overt "rational-legal" character of the procedure which transfers power to the new President, writes Verba, "it is through this procedure that the symbolic and charismatic aspects of office are also transmitted."[4]

Although the presence of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as the chief officiant of the inaugural ceremony indicates its primarily legal function, the participation of clergy underscores its more archaic and historic side. The use of religious language, by both clergy and the new President himself, also serves to deepen the loyalty evoked. Far from being merely pious window-dressing, such "extraordinary" language may well be more telling rather than phony and hypocritical. As Bellah points out, "What people say on solemn occasions need not be taken at face value, but it is often indicative of deep-seated values and commitments that are not made explicit in the course of everyday life."[1] Indeed, archaic symbols are more potent if they are taken for granted, expected, and ritually repeated rather than examined.[2]

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[1] See the introductory section of Chapter III, below.

[2] Sidney Verba, "The Kennedy Assassination and the Nature of Political Commitment," in Kennedy Assassination, ed. by Greenberg, p. 354.

[3] Verba finds "a complex admixture of the rational institutions of politics with the more traditional, religious, and indeed somewhat magical aspects of political commitment;" Ibid., p. 359. For Weber's types of political authority, see Bendix, Max Weber, Part III.

[4] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 359.

Even apart from religious personages and language, the inauguration of a President is a religious event in a very elementary sense because the transfer of power is always a momentous occasion. A great deal is at stake. In earlier times, the loss and replacement of kings was given a cosmic dimension and anxiety over possible disorder was great. Even today, the "crisis of succession" still shapes the inauguration of a President, in ordinary as well as in extraordinary times,[3] and the people's need for continuity and re-assurance requires the newly-elected President to take on a a presidential demeanor as President-elect, to be duly invested with his powers in a traditional ceremony,[4] to mantle himself with the nation's heritage and express its deepest values as high priest in his Inaugural Address--and subsequently to conduct himself in keeping with, and bolstered by, the great office which his predecessors have shaped.[1]

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[1] Bellah, Beyond Belief, p. 170.

[2] Fairlie, in a backhand way, acknowledges this when he asserts that the power of the British coronation lies "in the ceremony itself, not in the meanings which no longer have any power," which Edward Shils explicated in "The Meaning of the Coronation," Sociological Review, I (December, 1953); Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 90. The fact is that the archaic meanings make sense and have power within the ritual language itself but tend to lose their power when extricated and examined. Likewise, Bishop Pike affirmed that he believed in the Creed when it was sung but not when it was said. Perhaps to counter the devastating effects of Anglo-American empiricism, the British government and the Anglican Church have tended to prefer to keep their symbols archaic, to define themselves ritually rather than dogmatically, and to pride themselves on the magic virtue of faultless execution. For the examination of archaic symbols tends to break them, rendering them more suitable for historic use and also more liable to modern dismissal but less potent.

I

In one sense, Kennedy's inauguration began with his election. The inauguration ceremony finalized a process of transition in which Eisenhower gradually lost prestige and power as a "lame duck" President and Kennedy gradually acquired prestige and power as President-elect. The seventy-two-day period from Kennedy's election on November 8, 1960 until his inauguration as thirty-fifth President on January 20, 1961 provided an opportunity for the people to get used to their new President-elect and for him to get ready for his new office. When Kennedy was elected--and by a narrow margin--people were still pre-occupied with his personal attractiveness to them, his personal charisma. But when Kennedy was inaugurated, he became--regardless of the electoral split--the President of all the people, endowed with the charisma of office and bound to be followed. Far from there being a "quantum jump" in Kennedy's status after the election,[2] the period from election to inauguration gave the people a chance to gradually accommodate themselves to the choice they had voluntarily made, before the inauguration confirmed the binding leadership under which they would live for the next four years.

The preparation for Kennedy's assumption of the presidency was remarkably smooth considering his narrow margin of electoral victory. The patriotic recognition by Eisenhower and Nixon of the certainty of Kennedy's election helped to put an end to the charges of fraud with which it was initially greeted. "In few other nations," writes Sorensen, "could so narrow a result have been so smoothly accepted."[1] In contrast to many societies where the previous ruler must be killed, deposed, dead, or discredited before the new ruler comes to power, Eisenhower co-operated fully with his successor in both the gradual and the final transfer of power.

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[1] For the crisis of succession posed by the Kennedy assassination and its archaic precursors, see Chapter VII, #2B. For the people's need for ceremonial re-assurance despite Johnson's already being legally President, see Chapter IX, #3. For the presidential office, see Chapter III.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 59.

Following his popular election and its subsequent confirmation by the Electoral College, the Presidency belonged, proleptically, to John Kennedy. Already, according to Sorensen, he looked and sounded like a President in his televised farewell speech to Massachusetts. Already there is a touch of the presidential role of high priest in Kennedy's extolling of America's religious vision and values in this speech. Touching base with our Biblical heritage, he spoke of our government as a "city upon a hill," reminding us of this nation's originally historic (though subsequently archaic) vision of itself as the light of the world, an example to all, the instrument of God's saving power. Like John Winthrop's sermon aboard the Mayflower, which used the same image, Kennedy propounded a puritan covenantal civil religion for America, recognizing a somewhat secularized higher jurisdiction ("high court of history") which provided unrealized goals and values by which actual performance might be judged.[2] With this transcendent judgment in the background, Kennedy called on every citizen to cultivate historic virtues in proportion to his talents (on a Biblical model), concluding with a plea for God's help:

> For those to whom much is given, much is required. And when at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each of us, recording whether in our brief span of service we fulfilled our responsibilities. . .our success. . .will be measured by the answers to four questions:

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 260.

[2] Bellah, Beyond Belief, p. 201.

> First, were we truly men of courage . . . ?
> Second, were we truly men of judgment . . . ?
> Third, were we truly men of integrity . . . ?
> Finally, were we truly men of dedication . . . ?
>
> These are the qualities which, with God's help, this son of Massachusetts hopes will characterize our government's conduct.[1]

II

The weekend of John Kennedy's inauguration began in a festive mood. The festivities surrounding the inauguration helped to set it apart as a sacred time. They began on the evening of January 19 with an Inaugural Concert in an almost empty Constitution Hall, conducted by Leonard Bernstein, and a Democratic Party fund-raising Inaugural Gala at the National Guard Armory, produced by Frank Sinatra. These functions portray the President as a celebrity among celebrities, a leader among the social and cultural elite.[2] By associating with the stars of the silver screen, John Kennedy was lent a certain "star quality" just as the stars were given a certain dignity by their association with the President, resulting in a mutual sharing of charisma, though some argue that it was the President who lost dignity by his association with "Sinatra types."[3] The glamor of the concert and gala, together with the inaugural balls following the inauguration, rounded out the spare inauguration ceremony, and their festivity marked it off as a specially significant event, a cause for celebration, a sacred time.[4]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 263

[2] See Chapter IV, below. Jacqueline Kennedy, especially, was looked upon like a movie queen. Imaginal politics has encouraged politicians to cultivate the same kind of attractiveness and fans as entertainment idols.

[3] For the conflict between democratic association and dignity, see Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 206. Kennedy dissociated himself from Sinatra after the F.B.I. claimed that Sinatra had Mafia connections.

[4] Cf. Harvey Cox, Feast of Fools (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), chap. 1.

XUM

The sacred significance of the time was also underscored by John and Jacqueline Kennedy's attendance at Mass at Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church at 9:00 A.M. on the morning of the inauguration. In attending Holy Trinity, the oldest Catholic parish in Washington (founded in 1788 before the city of Washington existed), Kennedy affirmed a continuity of history and heritage. On this day, the altar was decorated with red, white, and blue carnations--thus mixing American symbols with the Christian symbols always present--and the Rev. Andersen Blakewell invoked the Holy Spirit (in Latin) to give wisdom, inspiration, and guidance to all government officials.[1]

At 10:56 A.M., President-elect and Mrs. Kennedy boarded the bubble-top presidential car en route to the White House. President Eisenhower met them at the door and held a conference with Kennedy in the Oval Office, preparing for his replacement there. At eleven thirty, the two men emerged, both wearing tophats as a symbol of continuity with the past,[2] and rode together to the East Front of the Capitol where Eisenhower sat next to Kennedy, his presence there again underscoring the orderly transfer of power.

At 12:21 P.M., the inaugural ceremony began with an invocation read--despite accompanying mechanical difficulties in the lecturn--by John Kennedy's pastor, Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston. Prayers by various clergymen were interspersed through the ceremony, comprising twenty-eight of its fifty-one minutes.[3] Archbishop Iakovos, Greek Orthodox primate of North and South America, gave a prayer before Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as Vice President, and, after that, Johnson's pastor, the Reverend John Barclay, pastor of Central Christian Church of Austin, Texas, gave a prayer. Rabbi Nelson Glueck, president of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, concluded the ceremony with a benediction, some lines of which were read in both Hebrew and English. The praying presence of clergy, as representatives of God and of the churches, lent religious legitimation to the inauguration. Even though the clergy did not administer the central inaugural event, the oath of office--in contrast to coronations elsewhere--they gave the first and the last word, setting off the whole ceremony as of special religious significance. The presence of four clergymen in the ceremony underscored the separation of church and state in America, in which no church is established but where relations between churches and governmental bodies is co-operative or dialogic rather than inimical. The inclusion of a Greek Orthodox clergyman in the Kennedy inauguration--for the first time--indicated recognition of its status as a major faith.[1] Although Cardinal Cushing spent most of his long prayer "instructing the Lord of Hosts in his duties in the coming four years,"[2] the participation of the clergy in the inaugural ceremony provided the opportunity, however underutilized, for an historic witness to a God who judges as well as blesses America.

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[1] For a newspaper account, see the New York Times, January 21, 1961.

[2] An historical past; Eisenhower wore a Homburg at his inauguration.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 100. Episcopalians advised brevity.

Following Cardinal Cushing's invocation, Marian Anderson sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." In contrast to the national anthems of many other nations, this song celebrates our flag (in a battle context), underscoring the special reverence Americans show the flag. Whitney Smith writes:

> Our nation lacks both a royal family and a single dominant religion. Hence, in searching for an encompassing symbol, the majority have traditionally rallied around the flag. We invented--the first people to do so--an annual Flag Day. Our children pledge allegiance to the flag. . . . Unquestioning loyalty to the flag has been considered a fundamental American principle.[3]

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 100. [2] Ibid.

[2] Whitney Smith, "The Flag Assailed: How Shall America Respond?" THINK, May-June 1970, International Business Machines Corporation.

XUM

Identifying the President with the flag and its mystique during the inaugural ceremony helped to underscore the President's function as the other main focus of national unity and commitment in America, the President as the nation's representative standing next to the flag as its representation.[1] It is also significant that it was a black woman who sang the anthem--one who had previously been debarred from singing in a hall rented from the Daughters of the American Revolution--symbolizing fuller participation of blacks in "the land of the free and the home of the brave."[2]

After the national anthem and the prayers surrounding the Vice President's swearing-in, Robert Frost began to read the new preface he had written to his poem "The Gift Outright." Having been touched at having "poetry brought into the affairs of statesmen,"[3] Frost's preface began:

> Summoning artists to participate
> In the august occasions of the state
> Seems something for us all to celebrate.

The eighty-six-year-old poet got only that far into his preface when the glare became too much for his aged eyes, and he switched to the poem itself, a poem about our land and people coming to possess each other, which commends the "Latin of the founding sages," naming Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison, our first four presidents, as the "mighty four" and calling them "consecrated seers." The unread preface, likewise, extolled our glorious revolutionary overthrow of colonial rule, which God approved, as starting the new order of the ages, inspiring other nations to become free. And then it hailed "the next Augustan age" to begin with Kennedy's reign as "A Golden Age of poetry and power / Of which this noonday's the beginning hour."[1] Here the mythological background is republican, secular, and literary, America as the new Rome as well as the new Israel, restored to the mythic golden age of antiquity rather than to the biblical Garden of Eden. The drift is still residually historic yet moves toward the espousal of an archaic myth of origin, which founds the cosmos at the founding of the nation and sees it as source of the world's salvation,[2] and toward a modeling on imperial, rather than republican, Rome. The inclusion of Frost in the ceremony underlined the President's cultural role as patron of the arts and encourager of high culture. "Of poetry and power" became a kind of epithet for the Kennedy regime.[3]

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[1] For both flag and president as "collective representations" in Durkheim's sense, see Chapter III, #2. For flag ceremonial surrounding the president, see Chapter IV, #1, below.

[2] Noticing that there was no black face in the Coast Guard honor guard that had marched in his inaugural parade, Kennedy stepped up black recruitment. Symbolic gestures outstripped practical measures at first. For Kennedy's approach to civil rights, see Chapter VI, #6, below.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 671.

Following Frost's recitation, Kennedy took the oath of office, the starkly simple center of the inaugural ceremony. Kennedy took the oath on the Bible, which is prescribed not by the Constitution but by custom—in this case using a Douay version[4]—but he did not have the Bible open to a particular passage, as most presidents have done, perhaps suggesting less reliance upon it. Placing his hands on the Bible, Kennedy repeated after Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren the thirty-five-word constitutionally prescribed oath, consisting of a pledge to conduct faithfully the office of President and to uphold the Constitution, followed by the cus-

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 13; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 274; Cf. also Robert Frost, "The Gift Outright," in Of Poetry and Power: Poems Occasioned by the Presidency and by the Death of John F. Kennedy, ed. by Edwin A. Glikes and Paul Schwaber (New York: Basic Books, 1964), pp. 7-9.

[2] "Freedom" is the American word for salvation; "Novus Ordo Seclorum" appears on American dollar bills. For Kennedy's use of "freedom," see #3.

[3] For Kennedy as a "royal" patron of the arts, see Chapter IV, #4. For poems written in response to his death, see Chapter VIII, #2, below.

[4] A seventeenth century English translation authorized by the Roman Catholic Church whose use would offend Protestants less than a Latin Bible.

XUM

tomary historic asseveration, "So help me God." Significantly, the Bible and the Constitution, involved in this brief ceremony, are the chief source books for America's twin puritan and republican traditions, the legacy of Israel and of Rome.[1] The administration of the oath by the Chief Justice, "embodiment" and guarantor of the Constitution and a continuity figure whose term is not affected by elections or changes in Administrations, adds judicial weight to the legitimacy of the President's ascension to power and symbolizes the modern legal basis of the President's authority.

After taking the oath of office, Kennedy shook hands with Chief Justice Earl Warren, whom he now supplants as high priest,[2] and with outgoing Vice President Richard Nixon, whom he had defeated in the electoral contest for the presidency--again stressing the smoothness of the transfer of power to Kennedy. Then, as President, Kennedy mounted the rostrum and delivered his Inaugural Address.

III

Kennedy did not begin his Inaugural Address with prayer, as Eisenhower had done, but the Address itself, obviously, contained a good deal of religious language. A little of it is drawn from the Scriptures--culled from suggestions solicited from Billy Graham and from Isaac Franck, director of the Jewish Community Council of Washington, D.C.--but most of it partakes of a more general language of dedication. The outermost ring of the speech tends to be historic, the penultimate ring archaic, and the center modern.

Kennedy begins his address on a lofty note: "We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom."[1] The rancor of the close election is finally to be forgotten, and all Americans are invited to rally around their new President; partisan concerns, domestic issues, concrete programs are all absent from the speech in an attempt to sound a universal note, summed up in the key word "freedom," before a worldwide audience. Continuity and movement are both promised--an end and a beginning, renewal and change--but the initial emphasis is on continuity as Kennedy observes that he has "sworn before you and Almighty God the same oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago." Kennedy links himself with his predecessors in office, with the people, and with God. He is beholden to the tradition of his forebears who preceded him, to the people who elected him, and to God who is might above all--obliged to each and legitimated by his faithfulness to each. Here a genuine historic note is sounded, a recognition of the sovereignty of God.[2]

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[1] For parallels between the two traditions, see James Sellers, Public Ethics, pp. 227-232.

[2] For priestly roles of Chief Justice and President, see Chapter III, #1, below.

Next Kennedy expresses a modern view of man's power to eradicate poverty or to destroy all life, but quickly returns to the heritage by reaffirming the revolutionary belief that "the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God" as still the crucial issue in the world today. Here republican civil religion comes to the fore, drawing on the American Revolution as the founding event of our nation (myth of origin) and on its philosophic precursor, the Declaration of Independence--which asserts that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness"--as the official justification for that war. The reference to God as source of rights is still historic but, as is generally the case with the republican tradition, God is painted in less transcendent colors and rights are given a more American and less universal shape, as if history began in 1776 and freedom were an American invention and gift to the world.[1]

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[1] For a complete text of the Address, see Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 227-232 or David, Kennedy Reader, pp. 7-11.

[2] For the sovereignty of God in the American tradition and the role of the President as mediator between God and man, see Chapter III, #1.

In the next two paragraphs of the speech, the archaism becomes explicit. "The torch has been passed," says Kennedy, "to a new generation of Americans, born in this century, tempered by war"—men born in a century of total war, men who, in Rostow's phrase, "had seen a lot of war and diplomacy," men who saw the world in military-strategic terms, men who longed again for the simplifications of war, men who sought to bring in a new era whose tone would be martial.[2] These men are pledged to wage total war for that freedom which is their revolutionary heritage. Although Kennedy mentions, in passing, our commitment to human rights at home, it was asserted as an afterthought to dampen possible criticisms from civil rights advocates,[3] and there is no hint that freedom may be lacking—in great measure for some or in some measure for all—in America. "Liberty" has become no longer a God-given right and transcendent ideal which judges us from an historic standpoint but an archaic American possession, a code word for the American way, which it is our destiny to preserve and export. And the struggle for liberty is to be undertaken, not with the prudence of modernism nor with the historic balance of a limited just war (which must be just in means as well as ends),[4] but with the archaic zeal of an unlimited holy war. "Let every nation know," Kennedy concludes archaically, "whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

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[1] Cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 104.

[2] Ibid., pp. 113, 115, 106. See also Chapter I, #2, above.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 105

[4] A just statesman will not "pay any price" but undertakesa war only if its costs do not exceed its benefits, seeking *jus in bello* and *ad bellum*.

After that stirring climax, the address modulates into another key in its long middle section. Here the tone is largely modernistic with a few historic glimpses; the language is less explicitly religious; and the subject matter is more specific. Kennedy begins with pledges to old allies and new states. He recognizes—on modern or historic grounds—that the countries of the Third World are entitled to go their own way.[1] And he calls for the eradication of mass misery and poverty there not for the sake of the Cold War but "because it is right" though he is quick, in the case of Latin America, to reassert our intention to maintain our hegemony in this hemisphere.[2] After an endorsement of the United Nations, Kennedy devotes the rest of this center section to arms control. His approach is conciliatory, calling an unnamed Russia our "adversary" rather than demonizing her as our enemy. The common demonic enemy is seen as "the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science" which "threaten to engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction" and leave us with nothing more secure than "an uncertain balance of terror." Kennedy concludes this section with a litany exhorting firm negotiation towards arms control, the peaceful use of science, and freedom for the oppressed (Quoting Isaiah), topped off with an historic vision of a "new world of law where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved."[3] There is a degree

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[1] For the world of diversity Kennedy seeks, see Chapter V, #4, below.

[2] For the Alliance for Progress as a symbolic adventure, see V, #2.

[3] Isaiah envisions the lion lying down with the lamb. But Christian realism stresses the universality of coercion within history and its rationalization as justice by the strong who make and bend law to their purposes.

XUM

of modern optimism which sees modern man as "come of age," as holding in his mortal hands the power to abolish poverty and war, as able to unharness science from dark powers (without deifying science as saviour as in a thoroughgoing modernism), and yet there is also an historic realism that recognizes that we cannot do more than begin and that sees--in a later paragraph of the speech--the "struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself" as a "long twilight struggle, year in and year out, 'rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation.'"

Despite the Biblical ring of this final passage,[1] however, its historic music is soon drowned out by a more archaic martial tune. Sandwiched between calls to defend freedom, its very impetus is put forward as derived from a more primal military commitment--"Now the trumpet summons us again, not as a call to arms though arms we need; not as a call to battle though enbattled we are"--and "tyranny" comes in to head the list over man's perennial problems of poverty, disease, and war, just as it did in the second paragraph of the address; the call to war overrides the call to peace. While asserting that "each generation has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty," as evidenced by "the graves of young Americans who answered the call to service" surrounding the globe, Kennedy sees his as one of the few generations in the long history of the world that has been "granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger," and he welcomes that responsibility. With a messianic-patriotic zeal, reminiscent of this nation's historic self-image as the light of the world intensified archaically into a manifest destiny, Kennedy claims that "the energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor (defending freedom) will light our country and all who serve it, and the glow from that fire can truly light the world." "Ask not," Kennedy says in his most famous passage, "what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

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[1] Cf. Bellah, Beyond Belief, p. 172.

Here the message is clearly archaic. The citizens are being asked to subordinate their wills to the general will in a kind of voluntary totalitarianism. With no recognition that "government has certain obligations to you and to me,"[1] Kennedy sees the nation as a society, the people as individuals, and the government as temporary office-holders fused without distinction as they are fueled by the fire of a general will, an elevated sense of national purpose, a collective energy, which is received from a single ruler and then returned to him in the form of a "personal pledge" from every citizen.[2] There is no room here for a modernistic recognition of the diversity of interests which a free people are entitled severally to pursue nor for an historic recognition of the limits of claims to national loyalty, but there is, rather, an archaic religious belief "that the source of energy in a society is greater than its parts, that people may be exhorted to transcend, not only the limits of their politics, but their own limitations,"[3] to submerge themselves in the glory of their nation, to receive an unquestioned meaning to their lives like the holiness of the dead soldiers who have gone on before, to transmute a time of peace into an hour of maximum danger, and to follow their saviour who calls not only to them but to the whole world to pursue "freedom" in a spirit of "strength and sacrifice."[4]

After this magnificent and sabre-rattling climax, the final sentence of the address concludes on a largely historic note. There is a modernistic twist in attributing a good conscience to ourselves, in letting something as ambiguous as history be our judge, in asking for God's blessing and help but not his justice, in man come-of-age taking over God's work for him, but the basic theme is the historic mandate, lying deep in the American tradition, to do God's will on earth.[1] In a kind of quiet postlude to the swords loud clashing and the roll of stirring drums, Kennedy ends his address:

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[1] President Eisenhower, cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 108.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 107-108, 13.   [3] Ibid., p. 109.

[4] For the precursors of this sentiment in the campaign and the Weberian view of the meaning accorded by the religion of war, see Chapter I, #2, above.

> With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

Thus did Kennedy as high priest reaffirm the nation's heritage and set the context, it was supposed, for the next four years. When he was destined, instead, to answer his own call to sacrifice before his term was completed and to have his own grave prominently join those of other young Americans who had answered the call to service, his memorable Inaugural Address--boldly archaic, mildly modernistic, residually historic--was also destined to be repeated from the mouth of a bishop, etching itself the more poignantly in memory and setting the context for understanding his death and our purposes in light of it.[2]

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[1] Bellah, Beyond Belief, p. 172.

[2] See Chapter VII, #3D. The funereal ceremonies were a kind of 'second inauguration,' often retracing the steps of the first one and inducting Kennedy into a new mythic status.

XUM

CHAPTER III

KINGSHIP

> I think the whole world offers no finer spectacle than this; it offers no higher dignity; and there is no greater object of ambition on the political stage on which men are permitted to move. You may point, if you will, to hereditary rulers, to crowns coming down through successive generations of the same family, to thrones based on prescription or on conquest, to sceptres wielded over veteran legions and subject realms,--but to my mind there is nothing more worthy of reverence and obedience, and nothing more sacred, than the authority of the freely chosen magistrate of a great and free people; and if there be on earth and amongst men any right divine to govern, surely it rests with a ruler so chosen and so appointed.
>
> --John Bright (1861)

The inauguration inducted John Kennedy into the office of the Presidency of the United States, an office not only defined by law but also rooted in custom and shaped by history, an office not only bounded by tradition but also exalted by myth and expanded by development, an office not only of power, conferred and accumulated, but also of authority (charisma of office). In a completely modern presidency, the president would be no more than chief bureaucrat, supervising lesser bureaucrats in the executive departments in the conduct of foreign policy and the administration of domestic programs enacted by Congress in response to special and constituent interests. But the actual Presidency which John Kennedy inherited was not only instrumental but also purposive, tied to values transcendent to him or immanent in him.[1] Kingship--whether conditional on the historic pattern or sacred on the archaic pattern--has been endemic from the first in the exer-

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[1] For the Weberian distinction between *zweckrational* and *wertrational*, see Max Weber, *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. by S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 4.

XUM

cise of the President's Constitutional powers and his extra-Constitutional symbolic functions, and it has grown with the post-Constitutional development of the President's powers which has further enhanced his prestige.

Kingship is, of course, very ancient, and elective kingship is, according to Henry Jones Ford, "the oldest political institution of the race."[1] Kingship is, in general, the "natural preference" of ordinary folk, who wish to reduce the complexities of politics to a form more easily understood through dramatic personification,[2] and kingship was, in particular, the form to which the American colonists were accustomed in the world of the 1770's and 1780's, which exhibited few, if any, extant viable alternatives to kingship on a national scale. The American presidency was "designed in great measure," Edwin S. Corwin tells us, "to reproduce the monarchy of George III with the corruption left out and of course the hereditary feature."[3]

Opposition to such kingship was indeed mounted by patriots of both puritan and republican persuasion. The puritans did not oppose kingship as such--indeed, their Biblical model of government had been historically expressed in terms of kings--but they repudiated any claims to sacred kingship or to charisma of office, and, like the Deuteronomist, they judged each ruler--without any special respect for his office--on the basis of his own faithfulness to God in the conduct of his office. Regarding government officials as sinners like the rest of us, not to be trusted or tempted with too much power, they sought to help frame a Constitution with checks and balances among the branches of the national government. The republicans, following Locke and Montesquieu, also supported balanced government, but they opposed kingship more directly. At the extreme, Thomas Paine denounced the British monarchy as a Norman intrusion and boasted, "In a representative system we avoid the slavish custom of following what in other governments are called leaders."[1] Likewise, Thomas Jefferson had accused not the British government, but the British king himself, of wrongdoing in justifying the colonists declaration of independence. When having a single executive was first proposed on the floor of the Constitutional Convention, Edmund Randolph branded the plan as "the foetus of monarchy," explaining that the temper of Americans is "adverse to the very semblance of monarchy," and patriot Patrick Henry warned the Virginia ratifying convention that the proposed presidential office was an "awful squint toward monarchy" as if that were sufficient grounds for opposing it.[2]

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[1] Henry Jones Ford, The Rise and Growth of American Politics (1898) cited by Marcus Cunliffe, The American Heritage History of the Presidency (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1968), p. 265.

[2] See #5 and also Chapter VII, #2A4.

[3] Edwin S. Corwin cited by Cunliffe, History of Presidency, p. 24.

Yet the lack of energy and decisive leadership in the Confederation and in legislature-dominated states showed the need for a strong executive in the fledgling nation, and the American presidency, proposed and adopted, was largely patterned after the strong governorships set forth in the New York and Massachusetts constitutions, themselves modeled on the British system, which Alexander Hamilton, a leader of the more monarchic conservatives, termed "the best in the world." In defending such a presidency, Hamilton did not so much argue that the president would not be a king as that his powers would be more limited than those of the British king since the president had a limited term, was impeachable, had qualified veto power, had concurrent power in making treaties and appointments, and had no right to declare war nor any spiritual jurisdiction.[3]

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[1] Thomas Paine cited by Lewis Lipsitz, "If the State Functions as a Religion," American Political Science Review, LXII (June 1968), p. 527.

[2] Rossiter, American Presidency, pp. 73, 76.

[3] Alexander Hamilton, The Federalist, No. 69.

Undoubtedly, one factor in the creation of such a strong, though limited, monarchic presidency was the availability of George Washington to fill and fill out the role. Writes Cunliffe:

> In part because the eighteenth century could not imagine a totally nonmonarchic Executive, in part because they wished to emulate the best features of the British system, and in a few cases because they secretly admired the pomp and circumstances of a mixed monarchic government, the Founding Fathers actually devised a type of elective monarchy, just as the critics had said. . . . The President was meant by some of the delegates to symbolize the United States much as the British crown symbolized the British realm. A President is supposed to preside, with dignity and detachment, over affairs from which he is somewhat removed. This quasi-monarchic dream was ideally personified in George Washington, the "Father of his Country."[1]

Indeed, according to Pierce Butler, delegates to the Constitutional Convention assigned "full great powers" to the presidency with the reassurance that George Washington, whose election was assumed, could be trusted to be a benevolent father rather than an arrogant tyrant.[2] As first President, Washington not only exercised the monarchic powers constitutionally assigned to him, but also, extra-constitutionally, lent the presidency his regal prestige.[3] Though not eloquent,[4] Washington was a war hero, an aristocrat, and a dedicated public servant--"first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," and, presiding augustly above controversy and factions, he admirably served as a unifying symbol for the new country. Unlike Jefferson, Washington was not opposed to monarchy or ceremony. He had been careful not to attack King George during the revolutionary war and even toasted him at his officers' mess.[5] Gentility and deference attended the President, usually freely given (though Washington had to wait for it from Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop when he was on his precedent-setting grand tour of the nation).[1] Senator Maclay poked fun at the pomp and circumstance of the "Washington court," and Thomas Jefferson deplored Washington's inaugural ceremony as "not at all in character with the simplicity of republican government and looking, as if wistfully, to those of European courts."[2] But Washington persisted. Into the psychological vacuum created by the loss of a king,[3] Washington took steps to satisfy the hankering for royalty, as he initiated the traditions of presidential kingship rooted in more ancient custom. Although there is some truth to Washington Irving's depiction of the substitution of one royal George for another,[4] what is surprising, in the context of the late eighteenth century, is not the degree of monarchy in the power and prestige of our first President but the restraint with which Washington approached an office in which he could have glorified and aggrandized himself to a much greater extent.[5]

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[1] Cunliffe, History of Presidency, p. 24.

[2] Ibid., p. 24; cf. also Rossiter, American Presidency, pp. 76-77.

[3] Future presidents derived prestige from the presidency; Washington gave it his--in Weberian terms, routinizing his personal charisma.

[4] Caustic John Adams saw Washington not as taciturn and reserved but as woolly-headed; public speeches were majestic but private talk was dull.

[5] Wilfred E. Binkley, "The President as a National Symbol," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, September 1952, p. 87.

John Adams did nothing deliberately to diminish the monarchic aura with which his illustrious predecessor had endowed the presidency. Indeed, Adams' warning that all dominion and justice might be lost if crowns and thrones were eliminated and his deploring of the title "President" as too plain to receive respect abroad have left him a reputation for being more monarchic in sentiment than he actually was.[6] But the "Virginia dynasty"—

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[1] Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 88.

[2] Thomas Jefferson cited by Binkley, "National Symbol," p. 86.

[3] Ibid.; Binkley speaks of a "deep-seated human longing for symbolism."

[4] When Rip Van Winkle awoke after the revolutionary war he saw Washington's picture on the pub sign in place of George III's: Washington Irving, Legend of Sleepy Hollow; cf. Cunliffe, History of Presidency, p. p. 24.

[5] Washington returned to private life when he could have been re-elected.

[6] Cunliffe, op. cit., p. 74. Adams was less monarchic in temperament.

Jefferson, Madison, Monroe--did an about-face during their twenty-four-year reign. Disdaining all pomp from a rationalist and republican perspective, Jefferson "unostentatiously walked from his boarding house" to deliver his inaugural address to the Congress whose executive servant he was. The minimization of ceremony comported well with both puritan and republican sentiments, for "the Puritans had not been one more whit determined to eradicate popish symbols from their churches than were the Jeffersonians to divest the President of the trappings of royalty."[1] The puritans--whose concern for ethics rather than magic turned even their church services into schools for Christian living rather than celebrations of the beauty of holiness--sought political and moral rather than ceremonial leadership from their rulers and, with their strong sense of sin, sought to stress a ruler's divine responsibility and to scotch any pretensions, which ritual might bolster, to divine right.[2] The republicans--with their view of the president as a citizen to whom the people delegate authority to execute laws--sought to perpetuate the myth of the president as a mere office-holder and, with their advocacy of strict separation of church and state, sought to minimize religious ceremonial accompanying government functions. The decline of presidential symbolism during the Virginia dynasty was accompanied by a decline of presidential power, which was dwarfed by Congress.

Following this nadir, however, with few reversals, the general trend since Jackson has been to increase presidential prestige and power. The presidency took a great step forward in Andrew Jackson, the first "popularly" elected President. With the franchise newly extended to the "plebians," Jackson became a sort of "tribune of the people," a demagogue compared to his more aristocratic predecessors.[1] Ironically, this rise of American democracy has increased the tug of royalty, indeed has been, according to Henry Jones Ford, "the one giant force that has done the most to elevate the Presidency to power and glory."[2] In the fairly stable latter half of the nineteenth century, Lincoln stands out as a forceful--even dictatorial--ruler in troubled times who by his life and even more by his death added a new dimension of glory to the Presidency and an archaic-historic, partially Christian-derived, sense of sacrifice and rebirth to the civil religion.[3] In the tumultuous twentieth century, the growth in the power and centralization of government in the welfare-warfare state and the comparative rise of archaic civil religion over declining prophetic and priestly historic civil and ecclesiastical religion--which might challenge its pretensions or compete for its allegiance--has so expanded and exalted the Presidency that it has not reduced but far outstripped the quasi-monarchic Presidency with which our nation began. "The outstanding feature of American constitutional development," concludes Clinton Rossiter, "has been the growth of the power and prestige of the Presidency."[4]

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[1] Binkley, "National Symbol," p. 88.

[2] Cf. Bendix, Max Weber, p. 312n. The movement from magic to ethics, which Weber calls "rationalization," is central to his sociology of religion.

With this history as background, we will now look at the presidency which John Kennedy inherited, especially in terms of its ancient roots and contemporary shape, and at what he would be likely to make of it. As we have seen, from its inception--despite puritan and republican warnings--and even more by its recent aggrandizement--not so much despite as because of the "modernization" of society--the Presidency has become an increasingly symbolic office. It has never been a merely managerial office.[1] President Eisenhower did take a stance above partisan controversy, symbolically reinforced by his piety, status as a war hero, and his father image, and in a time of post-war privatization, he had sought to provide minimal leadership (on a bureaucratic business or military model) through the office which he had inherited from "strong" predecessors in the war years. With John Kennedy we would expect quite the opposite. Neither the general trend of historic precedent nor the high expectations of the populace which Kennedy's charismatically oriented campaign and Inaugural Address had helped to intensify nor Kennedy's own activist temperament would have encouraged him to sit idly by while the organs of government churned out their work through regular channels in routine fashion. With Kennedy--if performance were to match rhetoric--we would expect decisive leadership undergirded by a full playing of symbolic roles. Largely overlooking the usually overemphasized modern policy-related roles of the President without denying their reality or importance, we will look at the symbolic roles of the President as high priest, representative, father, and imperator, both serially and as they are fused in historic conditional kingship and even more in archaic sacred kingship.

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[1] For the acclamation greeting Jackson's election, see Binkley's account quoted by Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 22.

[2] Ford, Rise and Growth cited by Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 83.

[3] Cf. Bellah, Beyond Belief, pp. 176-179. Bellah sees the addition of non-sectarian Christian symbols to earlier Hebraic ones but deals only at the historic level. For archaism, see Chapters VII, #2A and VIII, #7, below.

[4] Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 79.

I

Ritual action is as old as man. In the primitive form of archaic civil religion, old men collectively exercised both political and religious leadership, conducting both wars and ceremonies, including periodic ecstatic rituals which replenished the interdependent life of man and nature and reinforced the sacred ancestral patterns.[2] In the imperial form of archaic civil religion, political functions were centralized in the king and priests subservient to him took on some religious functions, but the central role of high priest in the world-renewing ritual fell to the king who played the part of the humiliated and triumphant god from whom he was specially descended and with whom he was directly identified.[1] Historic civil religion did not seek to remove the king's sacerdotal role or sonship, but it sought to limit it by redefining the king's tie to God as one of responsibility and conditional favor rather than one of descent and identification, by subjecting him to prophetic criticism, and by making his legitimation at least partially dependent on priests somewhat independent of his control, e.g., by putting coronation in the hands of church priests.[2] The decline of historic civil religion has led to a modernist dedivinization which disparages a transcendent God and an archaic redivinization which promotes nationalist feeling, exchanging an unseen and discredited God for national symbols and agencies which are closer to home, more easily grasped, and more directly influenceable and influential. This switch serves to exalt the President.

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[1] Said Herbert Hoover: "The Presidency is more than executive responsibility. It is the symbol of America's high purpose. The President must represent the Nation's ideals;" quoted by Cunliffe, Presidency in History, p. 234.

[2] Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (New York: The Free Press, 1915) is my basic source for primitive religion and society.

We have seen the President as high priest in Kennedy's inauguration. As we noted, the prayers of ecclesiastical priests provides a potentially historic note as they assist in the "ordination" of the "high priest," but the chief celebrant is the Chief Justice, guarantor of the sacred Constitution, who provides continuity between administrations, administers the oath of office, and continues to promulgate the legal precipitates of our tradition in technical language. The President himself, however, is the highest priest of all, who gives the "sermon of the day" in his Inaugural Address. Like the old men of primitive times, it is the President who is the chief heir of the nation's forebears, defender of its sacred revolutionary tradition, sworn upholder of the Constitution. Like an imperial sacred king, he is the chief interpreter and embodiment of the sacred myths of the nation's past origin, present mission, and future destiny. Like an historic king, the President takes the oath before God and the people, as Kennedy reiterated in his Inaugural Address, standing as a mediator between God and the nation, responsible to God for leading the nation through the office which the people have committed to him and praying for God's blessing and help as he goes forward to do God's work on earth.[1]

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[1] I use the term "king" to cover also chief, emperor, czar, maharaja, mogul, etc. For the king's role in the Mesopotamian world-renewing festival, see Mircea Eliade's Cosmos and History. For a contrast with a more absolute divine kingship pattern, see Henri Frankfort's Kingship and the Gods.

[2] For Hebrew kingship patterns, see Mowinkel's He That Cometh. The Biblical prototype for church participation in coronation is Samuel's annointing of David. Archaism prefers a subservient church. Charlesmagne took his crown from the Pope and crowned himself. The British monarch is head of the church, high priest over the priests who crown him.

The President continues to reaffirm the American heritage sacerdotally beyond the inaugural ceremonies in the periodic celebration of holidays commemorating significant events or figures in American history, including the celebration of presidential birthdays which help to keep the presidential myth alive. The resemblance to the church's holy days and liturgical calendar is striking. Seeing both as rooted in the periodic primitive rituals which were mother to them both, Shils and Young ask, rhetorically, "What is the essential difference between Christians celebrating principal dates in the life of Christ . . . and a reunion of citizens commemorating . . . some great event in national life?"[2] There are differences, to be sure, between ecclesiastical holy days and national holidays, between church services and civic ceremonies. Yet both have an authentically religious dimension, despite secularization, and it is the President himself who presides over the

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[1] For Kennedy's Inaugural Address, see Chapter II, #3, above.

[2] Shils and Young, "Meaning of Coronation," Sociological Review, I (December 1953) cited by Lipsitz, "If the State Functions as a Church," p.527.

XUM

setting of the national calendar which includes both civic and ecclesiastical holidays, proclaiming, among others, both Thanksgiving and Memorial Day, which can hardly be classified as purely civic or purely ecclesiastical.[1] Such national observances, coupled with presidential prayer breakfasts which Billy Graham arranges annually, not only express but also bolster civil religion and collectively reinforce commitment to the President as its high priest.

The President is not only the "high priest of the symbols and liturgies of the nation's self-understanding" in his ceremonial functions, but he is also (as "prophet") the "chief interpreter of our national self-understanding, establishing the terms of national discourse" in his speeches.[2] "The President is the American People's one authentic trumpet," writes Clinton Rossiter, and he is expected to mount a "bully pulpit" and preach the "gospel of America," not only in public assemblies but into the very homes of the nation via television.[3] As long as he operates within tradition, which provides the strongest limit on his power, the President's power over public opinion, intensified in times of crisis, is tremendous; "there is virtually no limit to what the President can do if he does it for democratic ends and by democratic means," writes Rossiter. "The President who senses the popular mood and spots new tides even before they begin to run, who practices shrewd economy in his appearances as spokesman for the nation, who is conscious of his unique power to compel discussion on his own terms, and who talks the language of Christian morality and the American tradition, can shout down any other voice or chorus of voices in the land."[1] Through the magnification of television this power to define reality can be overwhelming. Writes Novak:

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[1] For the intermeshing of church and civic ceremonies on Memorial Day, see Lloyd Warner, The Family of God (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 309, 52. Novak's "prophet" is included in my "high priest," his "priest" in my "representative." "National self-understanding" is Novak's occasional substitute for "civil religion," p. 17.

[3] Rossiter, American Presidency, pp. 30-31. I divide Rossiter's role of "Voice of the People" into speaking to (high priest) and speaking for (representative) the people; if vox populi=vox dei, there is no distinction.

> Television places in the president's hands enormous metaphysical powers not provided for in the Constitution--powers over reality, powers over appearances, powers over perceptions, powers over the imaginative matrix within which issues are presented. . . . In our day, on television, a single act simulataneously inhabits the fantasy of millions of humans everywhere, becomes them, obliges them to accept or to reject, enters immediately into the structures of their psyche. . . . This power over our attention, over our power to structure issues, is so enormous that it dwarfs all others.[2]

How would one expect Kennedy to function in the presidential role of high priest, which was already his at his inauguration? As we noted, Bellah sees Kennedy's mention of his taking the oath before God and the people as a recognition of the historic American belief that ultimate sovereignty belongs to God, to whom the fallible people are accountable for the operational sovereignty they exercise in choosing equally fallible leaders, and he understands Kennedy's whole inaugural address as a "recent statement of a theme that lies very deep in the American tradition, namely the obligation, both individual and collective, to carry out God's will on earth."[3] Fairlie is more wary. Of Kennedy's Inaugural Address, he writes:

> The rhetoric of emperors . . . describes an order in which their power is securely established, lawful under God and over the people, exercised to His greater glory and to their immediate benefit. The more universal the claim, the more readily it will be believed; if what is being described is in fact a universal order, then one may as well accept one's place in it.[4]

Fairlie then goes on to describe the obviously incompatible claims to world hegemony of several sacred kings and assimilates Kennedy to the same pattern. For, as we noted, the "freedom" for which Kennedy would give all was not a universal value but a limited American good, and, despite the historic frame that enveloped his Inaugural Address, it was the strongly archaic passages whose colours burst out and most caught one's attention. From such a high priest--intelligent, tough, and morally dispassionate--one would expect a reticence to annunciate moral values combined with a readiness to propogate an uncritical sense of national mission, to define a dangerous era full of crises, and to call forth a spirit of sacrifice commensurate with the greatness of the new era he was ushering in; in short, one would expect in Kennedy a high priest more archaic than historic.

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[1] Rossiter, American Presidency, pp. 64, 66, 84, 30.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 259, 4.

[3] Bellah, Beyond Belief, pp. 171-172. See Chapter II, #3, above.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 102.

II

From time immemorial, symbols have been essential to political life, not merely as a ceremonial veneer or convenient shorthand, but as the very basis for political identification and distinction. "The symbols of nationhood," states Verba, "are more than particular objects that are made to stand for something larger; they are major constitutive elements of polities and societies."[1] In Tillich's terms, symbols participate in the reality they symbolize; unlike arbitrary signs, symbols engender identities, experiences, and loyalties not possible without them.[2] Says Verba:

> Complex social collectivities, of which nation states are the biggest and most complex, are not easily direct objects of emotional attachment or commitment. Rather some common symbol that stands for the unit and with which people can identify is required..... . Attachment is possible to the greatest degree "when the symbol is something simple, definite, and easily representable while the thing itself (i.e., the social collectivity) is difficult to hold in mind."

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 353.

[2] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, p. 239.

[3] Verba,"Political Commitment," pp. 353, 354. The internal quotation is from Durkheim.

In the primitive form of archaic civil religion, in the absence of political or ecclesiastical hierarchs, totems and churinga stones were the emblems of society through which people expressed their identification with it and their devotion to it; sacred ancesters, with whom the old men were most closely identified, also served as "collective representations" of the society at its best. In the imperial form of archaic civil religion, the king alone represented the nation to itself, to other nations, and to the gods to whom he had special access, and his capital was seen as the axis mundi, the center of the world, where heaven and earth (and the underworld) met and transactions between them could be made. In historic civil religion, the king's representative role was supplemented and limited by the parson's representative role as the "person" of his people, who have a dual identity, national and ecclesiastical, and a dual citizenship on earth and in heaven.[1] In modern civil religion, the president's representative role is rationalized officially as a delegation of legal authority by the people to their highest elected representative while all along--below the surface and perhaps growing stronger as it came to fill the vacuum left by the decline of historic supernatural religion--people continued to express their devotion to their societies by allegiance to their representations and representatives. Like a primitive totem, the American flag stands for our nation and tends to receive unqualified devotion while the President as sacred king, clad in stars and stripes ("Uncle Sam"), defines more specifically that for which our nation stands.[2] "In a modern secular society," Verba avers, "this central symbolic role is pre-empted by the political symbols that stand on the highest level for the society--in the American case by the presidency above all. The presidential role is thus endowed with a religious quality."[1]

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[1] Durkheim and Eliade are major sources on primitive and imperial forms of archaic civil religion; for historic dual citizenship, see Hebrews 11:13-16 and Augustine's City of God.

[2] For the juxtaposition of flag and President in inauguration, see Chapter II, #2, above. The flag salute runs: "I pledge allegiance (devotion) to the flag (totem) of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands (representation), one nation, under God, indivisible (solidarity) with liberty and justice for all (claim or ideal?).

In his representative role as "Chief of State" and "Voice of the People," the President stands for the American government in his official actions and speeches, especially those from the throne, amplified again by television.[2] "The long catalogue of public duties that the Queen discharges in England, the President of the Republic in France, and the Governor-General in Canada," writes Rossiter, "is the President's responsibility in this country."[3] The President represents the American government to other nations when he greets distinguished visitors, hosts state dinners,[4] signs treaties, takes world tours, gives foreign policy speeches. Especially abroad, where views of our nation are more shadowy, people tend to identify the United States with its President just as we identified Russia with Khrushchev or France with de Gaulle (was it not his illustrious predecessor Louis XIV who said, "La France--c'est moi"?). Yet the President also represents us to ourselves. In a diverse nation with few symbols of national unity, with sectionalism dominating the Senate and localism dominating the House and the Supreme Court being remote, the President symbolizes the American Government to the American people as their only nationally elected figure. Wrote Woodrow Wilson:

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 353.

[2] Cf. Rossiter, American Presidency, pp. 14-17, 29-31 and Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 259. Writes Sorensen: "Even a superficial or boring speech, when delivered by the President of the United States from his Oval Office, is invested with a certain majesty and dignity;" Kennedy Legacy, p.125.

[3] Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 15.

[4] See Chapter IV, #3, below. Hamilton belittles this function as a convenience without consequence, a matter of dignity not authority; op. cit.

XUM

> His is the only national voice in affairs. Let him once win the admiration and confidence of the country and no single force can withstand him, no combination of forces can easily overpower him. His position takes the imagination of the country. He is the representative of no constituency but of the whole people, the spokesman for the real sentiment and purpose of the country.[1]

Not only does the President "unify pluralistic and divisive forces in American life as a national symbol," but he also, as the highest hero among heroes, "expresses the values of the culture in word and action."[2] He is, said William Howard Taft, "a one-man distillation of the American people, the personal embodiment and representative of their dignity and majesty."[3] The nation's press, thinking "human interest" necessary to keep reader interest and viewing non-partisan reporting as more "objective," have tended not to deal with the President as a partisan political figure but to discuss his private life in a way which tend to make him "the American."[4] Recognizing this trend, Mary Paul deplored "the irrational worldwide identification" of the President with the country as a whole, so that he has "become synonymous with the United States; his victories are American victories; his health, American health; his smile, his family, his hobbies, his likes and dislikes become symbolic of the country."[5] Yet the President is not merely an extensive external symbol but also is intensively internalized into our very souls in our identification with him:

> The President is not merely an actor toward whom the citizens are spectators. They participate in his actions; they identify with him. His acts are their acts. . . . He is their persona. He is the people, not in a sense that subsumes them under him ("L'etat, c'est moi!") but in the sense that he is their agent, their spokesman, their image of themselves. . . . He is priest--priest in the sense of incarnating our

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[1] Woodrow Wilson cited by Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 30.

[2] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 190.

[3] William Howard Taft cited by Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 16.

[4] Nelson Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky cited by James Kirkham, Assassination and Political Violence (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 128.

[5] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 212. Paul speaks of Kennedy here.

> self-image, our values, our aspirations, and expressing these through every action he selects, every action he avoids. . . . The president of the United States is one of the great symbolic powers known to human history. His actions seep irrepressibly into our hearts. He dwells in us. We cannot keep him out. That is why we wrestle against him, rise up in hatred often, wish to retch—or, alternatively, feel good, feel proud, as though his achievements were ours, his wit unleashing powers of our own.[1]

Especially for those with weak egos, the President's representative role is a source of self-exaltation and, to use an ancient phrase, of vicarious satisfaction. "The man in the street," writes Reinhold Niebuhr, "with his lust for power and prestige thwarted by his own limitations and the necessities of social life, projects his ego upon his nation and indulges his anarchic lusts vicariously."[2] Sidney Hook expands the thought:

> Perhaps, a more important source (than the parental surrogate function) of the appeal made by a leader to his following lies in the vicarious gratification of their yearnings through his presumed traits and achievements. The splendour, the power, the flame of the leader are shared imaginatively. New elements of meaning enter the lives of those who are emotionally impoverished. The everyday disparities and injustices of social life, and sometimes the lacks and incapacities of personal life, fade out of the center of concern. . . . The tendency to compensate for one's own deficiencies by sinking them in the glorious achievements of more fortunate mortals may be an ever-present feature of social life.[3]

The expansive infiltration of the President as representative into all aspects of American life, including our psyches, is further enhanced when combined with his exalted stature as high priest. Because of the democratization of his office, the President as representative must go through some "rather undignified paces" from which kings are exempt: he "lights the nation's Christmas tree, buys the first poppy from the Veterans of Foreign Wars . . . greets a fantastic procession of firemen, athletes, veterans, Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls, boosters, hog callers, exchange students, and heroic school children."[1] And yet, by virtue of his high priesthood, every audience he gives, every handshake is invested with magic and seen as a source of blessing.[2] And when the President proclaims a holiday or recalls our heritage in a speech, he does so not only as a representative who stands for us but also as the high priest who brings the sacred tradition to us. Thus the President's roles as high priest and representative are two sides of his larger role as mediator between the nation and the transnational: the President in his representative role embodies the nation to itself, to the world, and to God just as he embodies God or the forebears or the sacred heritage or the national mission to the nation in his high priestly role. In sum, in his combined sacerdotal role, the President is "the living representative of the continuity of American life, the embodiment of the political traditions of the nation,. . . . the guardian of the national morale; . . . the principal representative of the country to foreign nations, . . . a national symbol, . . . and the personification of American national character."[3]

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 164, 52, 5.

[2] Niebuhr, Moral Man, p. 93.

[3] Sidney Hook, The Hero in History (1943) cited by Paul B. Sheatsley and Jacob J. Feldman, "A National Survey of Public Reactions and Behavior," in Kennedy Assassination, ed. by Greenberg, p. 171.

How would one expect Kennedy to function in the presidential role of representative? As we have seen, the so-called religious—but actually representative—issue had been a central one in Kennedy's campaign, and he had demonstrated, despite his Catholicism, that no one could out-American him, that he could ably personify the American character, that he could represent both what Americans were and what they wished to be.[4] Kennedy took the President's role as national symbol quite seriously. "The symbolic feeling of a nation, the image the nation presents to the world, its power, prestige and direction--all ultimately will come to rest on the next President of the United States,"[1] Kennedy told a Boston audience on election eve. And he expanded his claim to include the whole "free" world. Not only did he say that "the President is the only one who can speak for the people of the United States," as if he were our sole representative, but he also said that "the President represents all of the people around the world who want to live in freedom, who look to us for hope and leadership,"[2] and he proclaimed his capital to be the axis mundi: "Pennsylvania Avenue is no longer a local thoroughfare. It runs through Paris and London, Ankara and Teheran, New Dehli and Tokyo. And if Washington is the capital of the free world, the President must be its leader."[2] One might expect Kennedy to have trouble polishing his halo as world representative in a world in which supernatural religion is declining, yet the resulting vacuum leads to quite the opposite conclusion if a source of divinity less celestial can be found: if the will of the people is divine ("vox populi est vox dei"), then he who represents them is divine. "We have an officer called the President, who, considering that our age is not religious, nevertheless begins to satisfy the divine aspects of the Roman Imperator," said Alfred de Grazia. "The President is believed to represent the people, not in an ordinary sense, but in the most remarkable of ways. . . . With the expansion of the Presidential constituency to include the whole world there is no possibility of a competitor short of the Universal Pope or Stalin or Mao Tse-tung."[3] We would expect Kennedy to function in his role as representative less on the pattern of conditional historic kingship--which allows for several representatives, several personae, several masks of man at his best in diverse lands and fields--and more as an archaic sacred king--sole and irreplaceable--in Novak's word, as "one pontiff bridging all."[1]

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[1] Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 15. For the "common touch" a President is expected to exhibit, see Cunliffe, Presidency in History, p. 335.

[2] See Chapter I, #3, above, and also Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 5.

[3] Kirkham, Assassination, pp. 124, 128, rearranged.

[4] See Chapter I, #3.

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 77 (italics mine).

[2] John F. Kennedy cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 67, 69.

[3] Alfred de Grazia cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 232. For more on the analogy of the President to the Roman Imperator, see #4, below.

III

The President's symbolic role as father is rooted in antiquity. Though rather egalitarian and not focused on a single man as leader, the most primitive societies we know relied on old men for ritual and political leadership. The traditional authority of the king was rooted in patriarchal and patrimonial relationships, and the sacred kings of imperial civil religion were looked upon as father figures, descended from the gods and, in turn, siring their nations. Far from being able to set the leader role over against the father role, as Schramm does,[2] it appears that father is the prototype of leader both in the development of the individual and of the race and that fatherhood is sought after even in contemporary leaders. Freud writes:

> We know that in the mass of mankind there is a powerful need for an authority who can be admired, before whom one bows down, by whom one is ruled and perhaps even ill-treated. We have learnt from the psychology of individual men what the origin is of this need of the masses. It is a longing for the father felt by everyone from his childhood onwards, for the same father whom the hero of legend boasts he has overcome. And now it may begin to dawn on us that all the characteristics with which we have equipped the great man are paternal characteristics, and that the essence of great men for which we have vainly searched lies in this conformity.[3]

Fatherhood is also the primary image of the divine in the historic Judaeo-Christian tradition. The Hebrew myth of a transcendent father undercut the pretensions of rulers to fatherhood though the myth was retained that the king was God's son in a special sense and a mediator figure, almost divine in some psalms.[1] Early Christianity transferred this sense of sonship to Jesus of Nazareth, a man whose messianism was not overtly political, thus diverting legitimacy away from the political realm and especially from Caesar. Christ's mediator role was taken over in medieval Catholicism by the pope (Italian: papa = father), the vicar of Christ on earth,, and by the priests, who were called "father." The Puritans demoted their ministers from such a mediator role and sought also to depaternalize their civil magistrates though the reverence which we accord to our Founding Fathers, and thence to Presidents, indicates that they did not fully succeed. With the subsequent decline of puritanism and the rise of the saliency of government and of the presidency at its helm, ministers of religion continued to be devaluated while ministers of the state took on a more paternal quality as mediators of the ultimate good to men. Robert Lane writes:

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. xv (quotation stretched beyond original context). For the great imprint of Kennedy on the American psyche and the difficulty of recovering from his loss as ego ideal, see Chapter VII, #2B3.

[2] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 2.

[3] Sigmund Freud, Moses and Monotheism cited by Fred I. Greenstein, "Private Disorder and Public Order," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XXXVII, 266.

> In many ways belief in a powerful state is a psychological substitute for belief in a powerful God. A positive faith in one's political system, like a positive faith in religion, reassures a person that he is properly connected to the powers that be. . . . He has been "good," and, like a good child, deserves well of the authorities.[2]

Thus in these modern times when the state is felt to be more potent than the church, the protecting father who promotes the good and punished the evil tends to be the President, not the priest, and it is his blessing and protection that is especially sought.

Not only the decline but also the pluralism of ecclesiastical religion in America indirectly encouraged belief in America as an underlying source of religious unity (Herberg), as the "first religion" which feeds

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[1] For instance, Psalm 110. For Hebrew kingship, see Sigmund Mowinckel, He That Cometh (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1956).

[2] Robert E. Lane, Political Ideology (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962) cited by Lipsitz, "If the State Functions as a Church," p. 527.

XUM

all the other religions (Mailer), as itself the primary "vessel of salvation" (Novak).[1] Novak writes:

> No one church was allowed to become the official guardian of the central symbols of the United States. Instead, the nation itself began to fill the vacuum where in many cultures a church would be. . . . The weaker the churches became as symbol systems, the heavier the symbolic weight that must be taken up by the state. . . . Many altogether secular and agnostic persons reveal in their political pursuits the kind of passion and intensity of passion one used to think of as religious. . . . For many politics is deeper than religion.[2]

The result is that "many of the functions that religion and religious symbolism perform elsewhere in holding society together are performed in the United States by the central political symbols,"[3] among which "the presidency is the nation's most central religious symbol."[4] If there is no delimitation of the field of politics, no rivals to check the President's fatherhood, then the people end up expecting "politics to take the place which religion once held in their lives and their politicians to be, not just archbishops, as Harold Macmillan suggested, but cardinals; not just cardinals, but popes; not just popes, but saviours."[5]

Reverence for the nation and for the President as father is rooted in, and grows out of, experiences of early childhood where the image of fatherhood is strong and the attempt to image a divine more transcendent than the nation is difficult. Writes Robert Hess:

> Not only do many children associate the sanctity and awe of religion with the political community, but to ages nine and ten, they sometimes have difficulty disentangling God and country. . . . (Though

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[1] Will Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1955). For Mailer and Novak, see Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 105.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 106, 108, 17.

[3] Verba, "Political Commitment," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 353.

[4] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. xiv.

[5] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 11-12, 9. For the contrast between Macmillan's telling purpose-seekers to see their archbishop and Kennedy's disdain for the church as he generated purpose, see Chapter I, #3.

> they may learn to sort out religious and political meanings after this age), the initial and early intermingling of potent religious sentiment with political community has by that time probably created a tie difficult to dissolve.[1]

This early devotion to the nation is generally focused, in part through holiday celebrations, on the concrete symbols of flag and President. Highlighting the latter, Verba asserts:

> Central commitment to the presidency originated in the early socialization of children. . . . The President is the symbolic referrent for the learning of political commitment; children first become aware of political matters through an awareness of and diffuse attachment to the president.[2]

To children, the President is well-known, respected, important, benign, and non-partisan.[3] Children see the President as very powerful, hierarchically bossing governors who, in turn, boss mayors, but they are not apprehensive about his misusing power. Even more than their own fathers, who may be hard and authoritarian in some classes, the President is seen as an idealized father with maternal characteristics as well. "In the United States," writes Robert Hess, "the highly benign, even nurturant, image of the President is congruent with the image of the paternal role which, in the United States, greatly overlaps that of the mother in expressive and nurturant components."[4] School texts also bolster the President's positive image as they seek to increase pride in our history and in our Presidents, so that children do not tend to make any negative assessments of Presidents until about the seventh grade and then not many. Not unlike the Biblical image of the shepherd-king, Sigel arrives at the following composite image of the President in the minds of school children:

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[1] David Easton and Robert D. Hess, "The Child's Political World," Midwest Journal of Political Science, VI (August 1962), pp. 238-239 cited by Lipsitz, "If the State Functions as a Church," p. 527.

[2] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 353.

[3] Fred I. Greenstein summarized in Lipsitz, op. cit.

[4] Robert Hess cited by Roberta Sigel, "School Children's Reactions to the Death of a President," in Children and the Death of a President, ed. by Martha Wolfenstein and Gilbert Kliman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1965), p. 39.

> The President is a man occupying the most prestigious profession known to a child, a man judged to be very competent, hard-working, well informed, with a tremendous amount of power; a man who cares a great deal about people, wants to help them and protect them. Although seen as powerful, he is not seen as punitive, particularly not by older children of upper social status.[1]

As children grow, idealization declines,[2] and children are likely to see the President less as a remote, omnipotent, and protective father and more as an imitable exemplary father. While certain presidential legends, such as George Washington and the cherry tree or Honest Abe Lincoln walking miles to return a penny, may be discredited in the process of growing up, the basic religious presidential myths of Washington as the nation's Founder-father and Lincoln as its Christ-martyr, inherited by their successors in the presidency, probably remain intact for most people. We would expect "grown-ups" to take a more critical and detached stance toward the President, regarding him as less of a father figure, especially if they happen to be chronologically older than he. But scattered clinical evidence suggests that the President remains an unconscious surrogate of childhood authority figures, that most of us carry a residual image of the President as a symbolic father, regardless of our age, especially activated in critical and insecure times. Greenstein finds that adults have great respect for the status of the President though they are often cynical toward politicians, that they generally have favorable views of the President's performance, and that they tend to rally to the support of the President, particularly when he acts at a time of international crisis.[3] Like obedient children in time of trouble, most adults tend to rally around their father-president in a crisis rather than blaming him for getting them into it (father knows best). Writes Verba:

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[1] Sigel, "School Children's Reactions," p. 41.

[2] Ibid., p. 62: 76 per cent of fourth-graders idealize all Presidents while only 16 per cent of twelfth-graders do do.

[3] Greenstein summarized by Lipsitz, op. cit. Nixon tried to foster a sense of international crisis when his father image slipped at home.

> In American politics, great crises tend to have integrative effects--at least in foreign affairs. Anything that increases the saliency of the presidency, even such a blunder as the U-2 incident or the Bay of Pigs invasion, seems to lead to a more favorable evaluation of the presidency. This would seem to bear out the basic symbolic importance of the presidency: if events cause one to think about the presidency, the result is increased commitment.[1]

How would one expect Kennedy to function in the presidential role of father? An answer is difficult because fatherhood lies so close to the unconscious.[2] At first blush, the difference between Kennedy's image of youthful activism and Washington's aristocratic benevolence or Eisenhower's genial paternalism would seem to preclude much carry-over of fatherhood to Kennedy, but his penchant for disregarding the fathers of the church and for creating crises in which people would uncritically rely on his wisdom and courage to pull us through suggests that he would develop considerable fatherhood along lines more archaic than historic.

IV

Respect for power is inveterate yet also historically variable in intensity. Although power was a source of awe and evidence of mana in primitive times, the glorification of absolute power in the hands of a single ruler did not arise until the imperial phase of archaic civil religion. While the Egyptian pharoah probably holds the record for absolute power--reigning three thousand years with nary a revolution to challenge him[1]--the Roman Empire provides the most inveterate model for imperial rule in the West. In a curious parallel to our own day, during the "first" Augustine age,[2] Octavian subverted a somewhat enervated republican civil religion in favor of an imperial civil religion while posing as an advocate of the ancient virtues and as champion of the Republic--acquiring no permanent office higher than tribune, being re-elected to his Proconsular Imperium every ten years, having titles of republican origin, Imperator and Augustus ("the revered one"), conferred on him by the Senate, and being popularly known merely as Princeps ("first citizen"). More adroitly than his great uncle Julius Caesar, whose virtual dictatorship provided a motive for assassinating him in an attempt to restore the Republic, Augustus acquired legitimacy by restoring a semblance of republican form and by encouraging a revival of earlier Roman religion (and building or restoring eighty-two temples in the process) at the same time that he, with mutual reinforcement, wielded unchallenged imperial power and organized an imperial cult. Subjects throughout the polyglot, farflung empire were required to express their allegiance to Rome by making a ritual offering in reverence to the Emperor as both the unifying symbol and actual head of the empire. Subsequently, this cult was further enlarged by Septimius Severus, who set up emperor worship in the army in place of the former worship of the standards (roughly the equivalent of substituting a pledge of allegiance to the President in place of that to the flag), and by Heliogabulus, who ruled as a completely Oriental despot, introducing the sun god, whose hereditary high priest he was, as the supreme deity of Rome. In 313 A.D., Constantine legalized Christianity but continued to tolerate paganism and to maintain the imperial cult. Indeed, as long as the Roman Empire existed--and in its caesaro-papist Byzantine and Muscovite successors--it derived the authority to legitimate its power quite independent of the church.[1]

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 357. As Watergate demonstrates, not all scrutiny of the President increases commitment. Yet it is important to see here what the presidency was like before the Nixon era and to see bitterness toward Nixon as a reaction to such a father's violation of trust.

[2] Kennedy's fatherhood may be clearer in its loss; see Chapter VII, #2C including a discussion of the Freudian position and its critics.

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[1] So tied was the whole cosmic order to Pharoah that opposing him was unthinkable; cf. Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

[2] For the "next Augustan age" in Frost's poem, see Chapter II, #2.

Only in the medieval period did the church acquire the right to legitimate and challenge state power on an historic civil-religious pattern, expressed in the extreme in the papal theory of the superiority of spiritual power over the temporal power exercised by patriarchal Germanic rulers. The Reformation bred a variety of forms of church-state interaction, including a subservient Lutheran church, an Anglican state church, and Calvinist theocracy, and the Enlightenment encouraged republics. In America, as we noted, both puritans and republicans sought to limit the President's power within a constitutional system filled with checks and balance.

Yet the decline of historic civil religion, the rise of nationalism, and the great expansion of government since the founding of our nation has attenuated many of the checks on the President's power; he has waxed stronger at the same time that religious and philosophical perspectives that might have challenged his pretensions to power have declined. Just as an alliance between a tradition-destroying modernism and a power-seeking archaism against a weakened historic civil religion produced claims to a divine right of kings in the early modern era and a series of totalitarianisms in the twentieth century,(unthinkable in archaic empires where imperial power was regularly hedged by tradition), so, to a lesser degree, our own government, when assaulted by the same combination of forces, has seen a weakening of the restraints upon it as it has grown in power and scope.

And when government grows, the President grows. Not only has the president's Constitutional role as Chief Executive been expanded so that he supervises two million federal employees (in 1960), commands a virtual monopoly of expertise in some areas, and wields an administrative authority "without precedent in all history," but he has also been entrusted with the post-Constitutional role of Manager of Prosperity, bearing prime responsibility for the maintenance of a stable economy through monetary and fiscal policy. Not only has the president's Constitutional role as Commander-in-Chief been expanded so that he may exercise a virtual "constitutional dictatorship" over the entire American economy and social order in time of war, may presume to initiate small, "emergency," or clandestine wars without congressional declaration, and always possesses nuclear power at his fingertips, but he has also taken on the post-Constitutional role of Protector of the Peace, expected to prevent, prepare for, and deal with natural disasters, financial panics, possible atomic attacks, riots, and other national emergencies. Not only has the president's Constitutional role as Chief Diplomat been expanded so that he makes agreements with other nations apart from congressionally approved treaties, is alone credited with the secrecy, dispatch, and expertise necessary for successful diplomacy (whether during a genuine emergency or not), and is recognized (by the Supreme Court) as "the sole organ of government in the field of international relations," but the pre-eminence of the United States and of the president within American government has thrust upon him the post-Constitutional role of World Leader, expected to exercise hegemony over the Western allies and much of the "free world." Not only has the president's Constitutional role as Chief Legislator been expanded so that he delivers televised addresses to Congress which have unmatched sway over public opinion, writes bills for congressional enactment, and uses the veto, the pocket veto, and impoundment as means to thwart the congressional will, but he also serves unofficially and post-Constitutionally as Chief of Party, which gives him a definite power base in Congress while his presidential pretensions to being "above partisan politics" can bolster his power with the opposition party as well.[1] We have surely witnessed, in our own day, the rise of an Imperial Presidency.[2]

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[1] Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, 2 volumes (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 145-161.

How would one expect Kennedy to function in the presidential role of imperator? In his campaign speech before the National Press Club, Kennedy averred that the Chief Executive "must be prepared to exercise the fullest powers of his office--all that are specified and some that are not," and he spoke of the President, though it was peacetime, as "the Commander-in-Chief of the grand alliance."[3] In another speech, while acknowledging a large congressional role in domestic policy, Kennedy asserted that "it is the President alone who must make the major decisions of our foreign policy."[4] Clearly, in contrast to Eisenhower, Kennedy meant to be a "strong" President. His penchant for creating emergencies was likely to enhance the powers he was accorded and his militaristic toughness was likely to make his possession of nuclear power an awesome power indeed though his coolness might moderate its use. On the other hand, Kennedy's disinterest in domestic programs and his impatience with the details of diplomacy would likely diminish his powers in the legislative and non-crisis diplomatic arenas. On balance, one might expect Kennedy to be an imperator on a basically archaic pattern, modified by whatever historic restraints were still intact within the constitutional system and by his own royal prerogative as a "benevolent despot" to exercise self-restraint in those areas where he willed to use his power and disinterest in those areas where he did not so will.

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[1] Rossiter, American Presidency, pp. 17-37.

[2] Cf. Arthur Schlesinger, The Imperial Presidency (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973): on Kennedy, pp. 170-176; comparisons, p. 212.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 66.

[4] Schlesinger, Imperial Presidency, p. 169.

V

The President's power role as imperator--which is not without its own symbolism--is fused with his more purely symbolic roles as high priest, representative, and father in a kingship which is the more potent because of the combination of roles which comprise it. Writes Rossiter:

> The Presidency is a whole greater and different from the sum of its parts, an office whose power and prestige are something more than the arithmetical total of all its functions. The President . . . is all of these things all of the time, and any one of his functions feeds upon and into all the others. . . . His powers are invigorated, indeed given a new dimension of authority because he is the symbo of our sovereignty, continuity, and grandeur. . . . The framers of the Constitution took a momentous step when they fused the dignity of a king and the power of a prime minister in the same elective office.[1]

The Founding Fathers, perhaps because some were rationalists, as Novak asserts, "eager to demythologize hereditary kingship," may well have underestimated the power and authority hidden in "dignity" and "ceremony."[2] And they hardly could have foretold the manifold changes in both religion and politics which has made presidential kingship quite a different creature from that which they designed. At the founding of our nation, most of its citizens were firmly rooted in Calvinist Protestantism--with established churches in several states extant or recently terminated;[3] by the 1960's, most citizens, according to Will Herberg, believed strongly in the American way of life--with Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish persuasions being subtypes of that American religion in a polyglot, pluralistic, and secular narion.[4] At the founding of our nation, having just emerged from the

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[1] Rossiter, American Presidency, pp. 38, 16, 17.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 265. It seems to me that traditionalists, like Hamilton, downplayed the dangers lurking in ceremony more.

[3] Puritanism influenced many denominations from Quakers to Anglicans; without uniformity, there was a general Ascetic Protestant consensus.

[4] Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew.

Revolutionary War, the citizenry was split between ex-Tories and ex-patriots, between Federalists and anti-Federalists, between those who favored a more monarchic or a more republican form of government; by the 1960's, our nation was largely united behind a Cold War crusade against Communism bolstered by a strong belief in its own form of government as a democratic republic with a President at its helm as the best in the world. At the founding of our nation, thirteen independent sovereign states came together to form a federal union; by the 1960's, the powers of the federal government virtually dwarfed the states and made state-oriented identity or loyalty a rare anachronism.[1] At the founding of our nation, not only did philosopher-statesmen such as Jefferson advocate that the best government is that which governs least, but, at most, the functions of government were spare in a simple, agrarian economy; by the 1960's, a complex industrial economy was honeycombed with government regulations and shored up at many points with affirmative government action. At the founding of our nation, the United States was an insignificant nation on an unexplored continent; by the 1960's, the United States was the leading world power in a shrinking "global village." At the founding of our nation, the President was an aristocratic figure somewhat removed from the political process and Congress was the focus of the people's interest; by the 1960's, the Presidency had become a highly political and democratized office whose power cut deeply into the powers of a declining Congress and into the lives of the people and whose prestige was almost magical. At the founding of our nation, concern was expressed over abuses of power in a potentially monarchic presidency both by those who framed the Constitution and by the early Presidents, who lim-

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[1] Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 60. Rossiter discounts states as not placing any real limits on federal power. Increasing mobility is among the factors reducing state identification.

XUM

ited themselves to two terms and generally exercised their power in a restrained manner consistent with the republican principles of the Revolution in which many of them had participated; by the 1960's, general concern about potential monarchy or dictatorship was so feeble, many constitutional checks were so attenuated, and self-restraint was so lacking in the so-called strong Presidents, that the President--backed by the uncritical loyalty of citizens who believe in the American way of life (which he embodies) and in the form of government (which he heads), largely unchallenged by the power of the states or of Congress, and directing a government which infiltrates almost every aspect of national life with world leadership to boot--stood "in a position of unprecedented power."[1]

And yet what makes the President so potent is not his power alone but his symbolically legitimate, if not ultimate, power; for sheer power evokes some awe, legitimate power evokes more awe, and pretensions to ultimate power evoke tremendous awe. Verba sees this in today's nation-states:

> In a secular society where formal religious commitment is weak, the activities of the state may be the nearest one comes to activities of ultimate importance, activities that fundamentally determine matters of life and death and of the quality of life. In short, government institutions may have a significance of a religious kind. The awe inspired by the ultimate power of the church in more pious times may be akin to the awe inspired in modern secular societies by the ultimate power of the state.[2]

There is some truth to George Wallace's indictment that, as a result of the growing power of Washington, we have become a government-fearing people rather than a God-fearing people though it might be more accurate to say that we have largely transferred reverence from the God of whom the churches speak to a politically immanent divinity, for, as Price says, "reverence goes where the power is."[3] And yet it is not so much by coercion as by patriotism that unqualified national power is established. Niebuhr writes:

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[1] Cunliffe, Presidency in History, p. 7.

[2] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 352.

[3] Wallace and Price cited by Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 158, 44.

> Patriotism transmutes individual unselfishness into national egosim. Loyalty to the nation is a high form of altruism when compared to lesser loyalties and more parochial interests. It therefore becomes the vehicle of all the altruistic impulses and expresses itself, on occasion, with such fervor that the critical attitude of the individual toward the nation is almost completely destroyed. The unqualified character of this devotion is the very basis of the nation's power and of the freedom to use the power without moral restraint.[1]

Such nationalism has few competitors:

> Altruistic passion is sluiced into the reservoirs of nationalism with great ease, and is made to flow beyond them with great difficulty. What lies beyond the nation, the community of mankind, is too vague to inspire devotion. The lesser communities within the nation, religious, economic, racial and cultural, have equal difficulty in competing with the nation for the loyalty of its citizens. The church was able to do so when it had the prestige of a universality it no longer possesses. Future developments may make the class rather than the nation the community of primary loyalty. But for the present the nation is still supreme.[2]

It is not so much power as symbolism and the tendency to credit the nation as source of all the good things in life that feeds an unqualified--and thus archaic--patriotic devotion to the nation:

> The nation not only possesses police power, which other communities lack, but it is able to avail itself of the most potent and vivid symbols to impress its claims upon the consciousness of the individual. Since it is impossible to become conscious of a large social group without adequate symbolism this factor is extremely important. The nation possesses in its organs of government, in the panoply and ritual of the state, in the impressive display of its fighting services, and, very frequently in the splendors of a royal house, the symbols of unity and greatness, which inspire awe and reverence in the citizen. Furthermore the love and pious attachment of a man to his countryside, to familiar scenes, sights, and experiences, around which the memories of youth have cast a halo of sanctity, all this flows into the sentiment of patriotism; for a simple imagination transmutes the universal benificences of nature into symbols of the peculiar blessings which a benevolent nation bestows upon its citizens. Thus the sentiment of patriotism achieves a potency in the modern soul, so unqualified, that the nation is given *carte blanche* to use the power, compounded of the devotion of individuals, for any purpose it desires.[3]

As high priest, representative, father, imperator, it is the President who is the chief recipient of such patriotic devotion.

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[1] Niebuhr, *Moral Man*, pp. 91-92.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

XUM

To what should we liken such a presidency? Neither constitutional monarchy nor dictatorship seem to measure up to it. Although the actual politicking, plus campaign hoopla and grass roots representation, which a President must do are thought by some to compromise his dignity in comparison to the British monarch, I think, rather, that Attorney General Stanbury was essentially correct when he asserted in 1867:

> Undoubtedly so far as the mere individual man is concerned there is a great difference between the President and the king; but so far as the office is concerned--so far as the great executive office of this government is concerned--I deny that there is a particle less dignity belonging to the office of the President than to the office of the King of Great Britain or of any other potentate on the face of the earth. He represents the majesty of the law and of the people as fully and as essentially, and with the same dignity, as does any absolute monarch or the head of any independent government in the world.[1]

Far from detracting from his image, power itself is a source of the awe which the presidency inspires. Indeed, the President may command more respect than the Queen of England, who has no real power and may be discounted as indulging in mere pageantry. On the other hand, the President has a dignity which dictators lack. Even Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, and Napolean, who, according to Truman, bite their nails with envy at the President's power,[2] commanded a certain awe and respect for their sheer power despite their lack of civility or legitimacy. And yet the President, in power no less imperator than they, combines this role, as they did not, with the dignified roles of high priest, representative, and father; indeed, for the President, symbolic power is the precondition of his pragmatic power.[3] With his combination of both power and dignity, it seems best to liken the President neither to these powerful upstarts nor to the powerless constitutional monarchs of today but rather to the rulers of the archaic empires, who were descended from the gods and, in turn, fathered their nations, who were defenders of the faith and patrons of loyal priests, who were mediators between God and man, and a scourge to other nations. Nebuchadnezzar, Solomon, Augustus Caesar, Charlemagne are the prototypes--partially historic but largely archaic--of the President's kingship.

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[1] Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 16. [2] Ibid., p. 28.

[3] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 24.

The personification and identification which such kingship encourages, in contrast to more impersonal institutions, further enhances the potency which the combination of power and dignity gives the President, as Verba notes in comparing the President to the classic, medieval king:

> Classic political history is the history of the life and death of kings. It is the intensely human drama of great men, for the king is a fallible mortal whom we can see and understand. But it is more than a human drama, for the king is also the symbol of society and nation, and is endowed with the highest religious significance. And the king is the government as well; how he performs in peace and war determines how his nation and subjects live. Thus the life and death of kings merges the history of great institutions with the story of individual men, the secular ruler with the sacred symbol. . . . Like the medieval king, the President is the concrete human individual whom one can see, on whom one can focus attention, and with whom one can share common emotions, and yet he is something transcending his concrete human aspects, for he is also the symbol of the nation.[1]

Actually, while no less symbolic and powerful than the medieval king, the contemporary President--with his extensive campaign, his Inaugural Address beamed to the world, his subsequent televised speeches--is a good deal more visible. The President has not only vestiges of the ancient myth of the sacred king and the images of previous Presidents to draw upon, but also the art of today's image-makers in projecting himself to the people. He is something of a "leading man" as well as "God, father, hero, pope, and king" in Price's catalogue.[2] He is a highly publicized and personalized leader who is viewed as an intimate and evokes familial emotions.[3] When the President-elect mounts the inaugural platform to be invested with the charisma of office—the power and dignity of the presidency—he comes already with his own personal charisma, his name and face and image inseminated and growing in the hearts of the people. Concludes Verba, "It is just because these three—his personal characteristics, his symbolic and semireligious positions, his vast instrumental powers as President—are in fact so inextricably linked that the presidency is such an important unifying institution . . . and the assassination of a president is such an intense event."[1]

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," pp. 348, 354.

[2] Ray Price's memorandum to Nixon cited by Novak, Choosing Our King, p.44

[3] Kirkham, Assassination, pp. 124, 128.

As President Kennedy, having taken the oath of office, given his Inaugural Address, and heard the benediction, dismounted from the inaugural platform, the presidency as a unifying institution and focus of the world's attention was evident, but the possibility of his assassination was far from most men's minds. Kennedy was, if anything, a symbol of life and vigor on that brisk January day. His star would continue to rise as he carried on his presidency under the colours of the Camelot, Contemperor, and Cosmocrator myths. How it would end no one knew. But perhaps the end was implicit in the beginning. Pride (hybris) goeth before a fall, and superbity invites assassination. "Offices of high visibility, substantial power, and symbolic (as well as actual) importance tend to attract the attention of potential assassins," concludes an official study of assassinations.[2] If assassination is as old as Caesar, perhaps it is for good reason. Like Caesar, we felt "the presence of a man who commanded any arena in which he chose to aspire," writes Fairlie, "until the presence seemed too commanding, and he was assassinated."[1] If it was not altogether clear at his ascension to the throne that Kennedy would be more than a modern political leader, more even than an historic limited king, it was clear when he died that we had lost an archaic sacred king.[2] If we had created "almost a God-King" in our midst,[3] then it was not altogether surprising that he should also turn out to be "the king who must die."

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 356.

[2] James Kirkham et. al., Assassination and Political Violence: A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), pp. 124, 128.

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 96.

[2] See Chapter VII, #2A.

[3] Edward Brooke's image cited by Novak, Choosing Our King, p. xiii.

PART II

THE MIDDLE

7

CHAPTER IV

CAMELOT

Don't let it be forgot
That once there was a spot
For one brief shining moment
That was known as Camelot.
--Alan Jay Lerner

It is the royal prerogative of every President, as the nation's representative, to receive forms of deference, to reside in the palatial White House, to receive and entertain fellow heads of state and their minions, and to exercise some degree of social and cultural leadership. But with the Kennedys there was a special sense of their being leaders of the social elite, the centre of a royal court, and patrons of high culture, which has been captured in the archaic Arthurian image of "Camelot." Artists and intellectuals felt especially at home in the Kennedy White House, and the common people visited it in droves. To them, the Kennedys were not merely lofty exemplars of America's aristocracy but also arbiters of taste, setters of fashion, and models of family life for themselves, and they let the Kennedys into their tabloids and into their hearts to an extent that threatened to undermine their ability to judge their President as a political leader. In the popular mind and to a surprising degree in the academic mind as well, Kennedy was accorded an unusual degree of pre-eminence as Head of the First Family, Head Cheerleader of the arts and letters, and Head Groom over a remarkable stable of professors in his Administration's "brains trust."

I

Although Kennedy was not keen on ceremony, refused to stand still while being hailed or to salute the flag every time it passed, and did not let all the deference paid to him go to his head,[1] he was surrounded by an elaborate protocol. No sooner did the President leave the inaugural platform than the Army Band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," again linking President and flag, followed by the deferential "Hail to the Chief"--an old Scottish regal air played whenever a President arrives or departs--and by a twenty-one-gun salute.[2] During the subsequent Inaugural Parade, Kennedy sat on a platform whose front bore a reproduction of the Great Seal of the United States, a symbol which would accompany him whenever and wherever he gave a speech, flanked by American and presidential flags, which also bedecked the front fenders of the presidential car, ceremoniously unfurled whenever he embarked therein.[3] Photographic icons of the President appear in every hamlet's post office, and it is considered bad taste to raise partisan issues when the President honors a town by visiting it with his actual "awesome presence."[4] While Kennedy did not feel the same wall of lonely isolation from friends that Johnson later related, his staff rose whenever he entered and addressed him only by the title "Mr. President" and never by his name, even in his absense--which was occasionally arranged so that his advisors could discuss issues freely without

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 514; Manchester, Death, p. 27; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 415.

[2] New York Times, The Kennedy Years (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 159; Binkley, "National Symbol," p. 86. Ruffles and flourishes sometimes accompany "Hail to the Chief;" its omission is an insult (Meany once omitted it for Nixon). For its words, see Manchester, Death, p. 26.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 63, 107, 131 (for car as a flagship).

[4] Ibid., pp. 39, 137. The American Legion post in Abilene, Texas removed Kennedy's picture, ibid., p. 89. Cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 219-220.

XUM

being impeded by the solemnity of his office.[1]

Protocol insisted that the President precede his wife when they officially entered the White House on the evening of his inauguration day, to the click of the omnipresent photographers' cameras.[2] The Kennedys made the White House specially their own in the public mind, and very little that went on there escaped public view. Jacqueline Kennedy spearheaded the restoration and refurnishing of the White House, seeking to make it "a distillation of American history and an expression of American excellence," and she took the whole nation on a television tour of the mansion. Aided by a new best-selling guidebook, pilgrims to the White House dramatically increased.[3] The public watched not only as the White House was restored in its public rooms but also as its private quarters were made over into a home for a family with young children, replete with cooking facilities, playroom, playground, tree hut, and lots of pets. Thus the White House became more homely as the Kennedy children "cast their spell" throughout it at the same time as it became more polished as a public museum and shrine.

Inauguration night the Kennedys attended the inaugural balls. The festivity of this finale, as of the opening Inaugural Gala, marked off the changing of Presidents as a kind of holiday or sacred time, and the opulence of its blueblooded participants marked them off as an American aristocracy. For the Kennedys, the balls served both as the concluding act of the inaugural drama in which they had starred and as a kind of ritual confirmation of their exalted social position. The Kennedys and Bouviers already belonged to the social elite, but Joseph Kennedy's Irish ancestry, Catholic religion, and sharp business practices marked his family as nouveau riche. Now, however, with the accession of John Kennedy to the presidency, the Kennedys, as the American equivalent of a royal family, had achieved unquestioned social pre-eminence.

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 258, 294, 418; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 734 and Imperial Presidency, p. 214. Truman also had a hard time giving up informal relations with friends; see Jim Bishop, FDR's Last Year (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1974), p. 631.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 77, 308 (on presidential precedence).

[3] In 1961--1,322,279 visitors passed through the White House; by 1962, the total was two thirds greater than in 1960; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 615, New York Times, Kennedy Years, p. 195.

More than for John Kennedy, the inaugural balls provided the occasion for Jacqueline Kennedy to make her debut as First Lady. Americans did not know quite what to make of Jaccqueline. She combined the roles of queen and of movie queen and was used and abused for both her roles. Some found her too dignified, taking on airs, too far from the home-town girl they expected their First Lady to represent. Others found her too lacking in dignity in her use as a fashion model and cover girl for tawdry magazines. The New York Times reported:

> Her activities suggested those of a full-fledged member of the so-called jet set. She spent winters in Palm Beach, water skied at Cape Cod in the summer, enjoyed weekends in the Virginia hunt country and vacationed abroad with her husband. She wore Oleg Cassini gowns, bouffant hairdos, and pillbox hats. It was not long before girls all over had that "Jackie" look, and agencies in New York advertised for models who looked like her. A column on The Times editorial page commented that "everywhere young women, eagerly helped by the magazines, are copying her hairdos, dress, smile, and manners." Another story said, "Jacqueline Kennedy is selling eyeglasses on Madison Avenue. Although the First Lady may be unaware of it, her name and face are starting a new fashion fad--curved sun spectacles."[1]

The White House began to receive protests from across the country though there was little it could do to stop the exploitation, which, after all, was only an excessive addition to the publicity it sought. One criticism, positive in its underlying premise, illustrates especially well the leadership in taste and in morality (in the narrower sense) which the First Lady, like women in Britain's royal family, is called upon to provide:

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[1] New York Times, Kennedy Years, p. 195. John Kennedy had a similar effect in promoting sales of cigars and sweat socks; Fairlie, op. cit., p.231.

XUM

> Mrs. Kennedy is one of the most gracious ladies our country has ever known—a wonderful example to hold up to our growing daughters. Therefore, I consider the picture of her seated on a swing in India with her dress hiked above her knees to be in very bad taste.[1]

While, in an incident of similar type, South Americans were astonished at Jackie's willingness to be kissed on a visit to a home for orphans, by and large, she was well-received abroad. There her queenly airs were more appreciated though again many abroad related to her as a splashy celebrity. De Gaulle was smitten with Jacqueline, and Khrushchev asked to be photographed shaking her hand before he shook Jack's.[2] Jackie got so much publicity on a presidential visit to Paris in May-June 1961 that Kennedy joked at a press lunch by introducing himself as the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris. Schlesinger comments on the Parisian response to the Kennedys and surmises its symbolic meaning:

> The Parisians cheered the President, but it was now apparent that, much as they liked him, it was his wife whom they adored. Her softly glowing beauty, her mastery of the language, her passion for the arts, her perfection of style—all were conquering the skeptical city. This was a good deal more than the instinctive French response to a charming woman. It had the air of a startled rediscovery of America as a new society, young and cosmopolitan and sophisticated, capable of aspiring to the leadership of civilized people.[3]

Later that month in Vienna, Mrs. Khrushchev, in response to a crowd bellowing "Jah-kee," interrupted a luncheon at Pallavicini Palace to bring Jackie to the window. In London at the conclusion of the European trip, 250,000 people came out to catch a glimpse of the "cheerful young Kennedy and the already legendary 'Jackie,'" giving them a "regal welcome." Noting the movie queen role along with her more official position, a cartoon by Vicky in the *London Evening Standard* portrayed Jacqueline as the Statue of Liberty, one hand holding the torch of freedom and the other a copy of Vogue.[1]

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[1] Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 31.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 633. There is an ironic symbolism here: in contrast to Jacqueline's success on the publicity front, the European trip was, for Kennedy, a diplomatic disaster; see Chapter VI, #2.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 328.

Though her femininity may seem as outdated in some quarters today as Jack's *machismo*,[2] Jacqueline, according to her admirers, eventually won the hearts of the people as an ideal woman and perfect First Lady. Her finishing school accent and aura of *haut-monde* no longer seemed out of place once she was established in her role as President's wife. Manchester says:

> Elegance might be a liability for the wife of a minor politician, but it was an enormous asset for a First Lady. Voters, especially women voters, admired beauty and style in the executive mansion. One of a President's duties is to *preside*. It was exciting to know that a queenly figure stood by his side.[3]

And Sorensen adds:

> The nation for all its earlier reservations came to adore her because she remained utterly faithful to herself. The things that people once held against her--her unconventional beauty, the unAmerican elegance, the taste for French clothes and French food--were no longer liabilities but assets. She represented all at once not a negation of her country but a possible fulfillment of it, a dream of civilization and beauty, a suggestion that America was not to be trapped forever in the bourgeois ideal.
>
> By continuing with her 'fancy ways' and fox hunting, her water skiing and antique hunting; by refusing to appear more folksy at political rallies or less glamorous in poorer nations, by carrying her pursuit of quality and beauty into White House decorations and dinners, she brought great pleasure to millions in every land, rich and poor alike. She became a world-wide symbol of American culture and good taste, and offered proof in the modern age that the female sex can succeed by merely remaining feminine.[4]

In many ways, Jacqueline's femininity, haughty taste, and regal airs were ideally offset by Jack's masculinity, plain tastes, and distaste for ceremonial. While Jacqueline would be dining on *paté de foie gras* in

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[1] New York Times, *Kennedy Years*, p. 254.

[2] In *The Kennedy Neurosis*, Nancy Clinch sees in Kennedy a "drive to power and dominance of others rather than a drive for equality, love, and sharing." For Jack's toughness, see Chapter I, #1 above. Jackie easily fit into the complementary role of "sex object." While Schlesinger found in her awareness and judgment "underneath a veil of lovely inconsequence," the latter image seems more apt (*A Thousand Days*, p. 25).

[3] Manchester, *Death*, p. 8. [4] Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 429.

XUM

the cabin of the sailboat, Jack would be in the back munching on a peanut butter sandwich; while Jacqueline would be doting on opera, Jack would be dozing.[1] Jacqueline's pretensions and politesse were matched by Jack's irreverent wit and impatience with protocol. She was wife and mother; he was war hero and father. In a still polarized America, Jacqueline represented the feminine pole and Jack the masculine pole, and together they were part of the national symbol which constitutes the presidency (including even an imputation of a shared magic power of touch).[2] "The President was so tanned and healthy, his wife was so beautiful, . . . you just felt here was the all-American couple," said a by-stander on one of their tours; "they look like Mr. and Mrs. America,"[3] said Dave Powers as Jacqueline joined the President before disembarking from the presidential jet.

The Kennedy children and the Kennedy clan rounded out the "First Family," which was the butt of Vaughn Meader's satirical record by that title and others like it--perhaps encouraged by the legitimation which Kennedy's own wit gave to an "exuberant revival of American irreverence"[4]--as well as being the largely idolized focus of the insatiable public curiosity directed to "the whole dynamic, football-playing, theatre-going, party=throwing, pool-pushing, child-rearing family."[5] The antics of the young Kennedy children especially captivated the hearts of the country and lent to a presidency pulled in a regal direction by Jacqueline more of a common touch, with which all who raised children could identify. Again, the Kennedys managed to image us both as we were and as we wished to be. Kennedy's obvious delight in children, his clapping his hands by the doors to the Rose Garden and having all the children and pets within earshot rush into his arms, his making up stories and teaching poetry to his children before bed, his rocking chair as a symbol of old-fashioned values[1]—all contributed to the image, relayed to a delighted, adoring public through the media, of Kennedy as a family man and of the Kennedy family as a model family for the nation. And when Kennedy was assassinated, it was primarily with family imagery that the people vested the loss of a man they had known and loved.[2]

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 66; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 433.

[2] Manchester describes a woman with glassy stare exclaiming, "Oh, my God! She really did touch me," after lurching toward Jacqueline and brushing her hand; Death, p. 76. For magic touch, see Chapter 1, #3.

[3] A.P., The Torch Is Passed, p. 9; Manchester, Death, p. 129.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 667, 692; Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 414, 429.

[5] A.P., The Torch Is Passed, pp. 19-20.

Even when we attempt to take off the no-longer-curved spectacles of a decade later—with, for instance, our very different views of the roles of men and women in the human community, at least in more countercultural circles—it is hard to see just what we saw in the Kennedys. But it is clear that we did an awful lot of looking—and mainly looking up—even when we endeared the Kennedys and their foibles to ourselves in mild satire. A certain amount of deference and social-familial leadership goes with the office of the presidency, and a modernistic dismissal of it is simply ineffective against it. Indeed, Kennedy's own touch of witty and contained iconoclasm merely enhanced an image which was in danger of becoming too overbearing without it (and thus less representative and less potent), and even Jacqueline stepped down a peg by having her servants call her Mrs. Kennedy rather than the First Lady, by attempting to disabuse Caroline and John John of any notion that they were princess and prince of the realm, and by appearing in public on private pleasure trips in less than full regalia in studied informality.[1] Yet the disappearance of virtually any wall of separation between the President's public and private life was neither good for him nor for us. The Kennedys were already too conscious of living on a conspicuous stage with the eyes of all the world upon them to deny them any intermissions, and the centralization of not only the political realm but also the whole of American life at its most intimate in the White House made it too much of an archaic axis mundi from which all good things flow, too much the unique abode of fullness (pleroma), too much the destination of actual and symbolic pilgrims from the hinterland.[2] Despite the apparent harmlessness and triviality of our adulation, we seemed to be destined to exalt a presidency which could never be a purely modern office and which had already burst its historic bounds into an archaic pre-eminence, making even heavier its burden and its glory.

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 613; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 412.

[2] See Chapter VII, #2D., below.

II

Camelot spelled not only new faces in a restored White House but also a new day for the arts and letters, restored to a place of honor at the royal court. In the Fifties, high technology in armaments and in the economy required greater use of intellectuals with technical competence in government, thus making them more prominent in American life, but they did not really feel at home in the Eisenhower regime and their new prominence made them better targets for McCarthy's venom. Adlai Stevenson was ridiculed as an egghead, while experienced businessmen ran the government, and the intellectuals who backed Adlai in droves felt repudiated with him.[1] The arts also languished for lack of public support. Kennedy sought to change this. In his presidential campaign, he called for the "pursuit of excellence in all phases of national life" and for a partnership between the intellectual world and the political world in order to solve the sophisticated problems facing us. In conjunction with a "creative burst" in the political field, which Kennedy's accession would bring, he proclaimed a "New Frontier in the arts," the inauguration of "a period of sustained cultural brilliance" for which he, as President, would help to set the tone.[2] Symbolic of this promise, he invited Robert Frost to participate in his inauguration and a bevy of artists and intellectuals to attend it.[3] Several were duly impressed by this presidential incursion into their world and felt it as a revival of their own spirits. Said Archibald MacLeish: "No country which did not respect its arts has ever been great and ours has ignored them too long. The inaugural address . . . left me proud and hopeful to be an American--something I have not felt for almost twenty years."[4] E. B. White crowed:

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 614.

[2] Several phrases filched from Fairlie, in turn, drawing on Edmund Burke and John Winthrop; cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 37, 96, 231.

> One of the excitements of American citizenship is a man's feeling of identity with his elected President. I never had this feeling hit me so hard as January 20, 1961. . . . I promise that wherever I can manage I'll blow my little draft of air on the beloved flame.[5]

John Steinbeck exulted in the end of the old regime, exclaiming, "What a joy that literacy is no longer prima facie evidence of treason," while Lincoln Kirsten exalted the new era, saying to Kennedy, "Thank you for restoring to the United States the pleasures and powers of the mind."[6]

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[1] Cf. Richard Hofstadter in Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 113; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 41; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 671. For new complexities demoting intellectuals also, see Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 120.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 84.

[3] See Chapter II, #2, above.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 671. [5] Ibid. [6] Ibid.

The inaugural fete was followed up by frequent inclusion of artistic performances at the conclusion of state dinners. A New York Times story in the summer of 1962 gushed:

> The palpable love affair between the White House and a jade called culture shows signs of reaching an impassioned peak this year. With Robert Frost's participation in the Inaugural ceremony heralding the romance and three command performances cementing it in recent months, the extraordinary liaison between politics and art has been attracting comment abroad and speculation at home—particularly in the cultural wasteland of Washington itself.[1]

In contrast to previous presidential preferences for short, light pieces, the Kennedys favored longer, highbrow renditions as more in keeping with occasions of state. Pablo Casals, despite his ban on playing in any country which recognized Franco's Spain, gave a concert in the White House to show his admiration for Kennedy. Also among those appearing at the White House to perform, to be honored, or to attend the performances of others were: Carl Sandburg, Gian Carlo Menotti, Leonard Bernstein, George Balanchine, Ralph Richardson, Elia Kazan, Alexander Schneider, Meczyslaw Horszowski, Samuel Barber, Aaron Copeland, Norman Dello Joio, William Schuman, Roger Sessions, Virgil Thompson, Eugene Ormandy, Leopold Stokowski, Igor Stravinsky, Grace Bumbry, Roberta Peters, Jerome Hines, Isaac Stern, Fredric March, the American Ballet Theatre, and Jerome Robbin's "Ballets: USA"—all, at various times, under one roof. After such performances, all who attended, said Sorensen, felt that they were "truly in the First House of the land."[2]

The introduction of Shakespearean drama into the White House—not merely on the lawn but, for the first time in fifty years, within the mansion itself on a specially constructed stage in the East Ballroom—added

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[1] New York Times, Kennedy Years, p. 308.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 431.

XUM

another dimension. Said the New York Times of that occasion: "Theatre in the royal tradition was introduced into the White House tonight and was royally applauded."[1] Not simply the presentation of excerpts of high culture within the royal setting of state dinners (whose protocol was imported from European royal courts and remained in force despite the Kennedy's attempts to minimize it),[2] but also the inclusion of medieval arts forms, which dealt with royalty and had been performed indoors under royal auspices for specially invited audiences, enhanced the Kennedys' image as royal patrons of culture.

Yet, again, Jacqueline Kennedy's arch regalism was offset by Jack's muted plebianism. His tastes were not as refined as hers, and, as Sorensen kindly put it, "his respect for artistic excellence exceeded his appreciation."[3] Kennedy liked musicals, such as "Camelot," which was also performed at the White House. And "Camelot" ably symbolized the Kennedy court, which was as modern as the latest Broadway hit in its desire to be contemporary and as archaic as a Celtic dynasty in its desire to be the center of all nobility and civilization.

Besides artists, President Kennedy also honored intellectuals at White House dinners. As guests for their biggest dinner, the Kennedys brought together forty-nine Nobel prize winners living in the Western hemisphere plus 124 other scientists, writers, editors, and educators. Kennedy quipped that "this is the most extraordinary collection of talent that has ever been gathered together at the White House--with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."[4] Included in the gathering were two politically controversial scientists, Dr. Linus C. Pauling, who had left a picket line outside the White House to attend the dinner, and Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, who had been denied a security clearance by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1954. At the dinner, the President congratulated Pauling for expressing his opinions so strongly, and the rehabilitated Oppenheimer was later presidentially awarded the Enrico Fermi prize.[1] Kennedy also initiated the Presidential Medal of Freedom awards to honor those civilians "whose talentsenlarges the public vision of the dignity with which life can be graced and the fullness with which it can be lived," and he insisted that awards go to several controversial figures, including some, such as Edmund Wilson, who were critical of his Administration, thus defanging criticism by baptizing it from his font of grace and fullness.[2]

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[1] New York Times, Kennedy Years, p. 308.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 430; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 612.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 433. [4] Ibid., p. 430.

The Kennedys found other ways to applaud the arts and letters outside the White House. Under Jacqueline's guidance, the Cabinet sponsored poetry seminars, and a series of concerts for youth was presented. The Kennedys attended the opening performances of both the Opera Society and the National Symphony Orchestra. Kennedy established an image of artistic patronage by appointing August Heckscher as a Special Consultant on the Fine Arts for the White House; his task was to survey the relationship between the arts and government and to act as an intermediary between the White House and federal and private agencies. By executive order, Kennedy also created the first Presidential Advisory Council on the Arts.[3] With Jacqueline's help, he took steps to preserve historic houses on Lafayette Square, set plans in motion for refurbishing Pennsylvania Avenue, and took a public stand in favor of building a National Cultural Center in the nation's capital. J. Roy Carroll, Jr., the president of the American Institute of Architects extolled the President's contribution to a grander pilgrimage experience, calling him "the first President of the United States--except possibly the first and third ones--who has had a vision of what architecture and its allied arts can mean to the people of a nation, and of what the careful nurturing of the architecture of the city of Washington can mean to the millions who come here to pay homage to the heart of their country."[1]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 28.

[2] Ibid., p. 430; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 672.

[3] New York Times, Kennedy Years, p. 308.

Kennedy kept in touch with Robert Frost, visited with him at the White House, corresponded with him through the years, and paid posthumous tribute to him at Amherst in October 1963. In the tribute, Kennedy stressed the independence and critical function of the artist as he elaborated the "poetry and power" theme which Frost had enunciated at his inaugural:

> When power leads men toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the area of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses. The men who create power make an indispensable contribution to the nation's greatness, but the men who question power make a contribution just as indispensable . . . for they determine whether we use power or power uses us.
>
> We must never forget that art is not a form of propoganda; it is a form of truth. . . . The highest duty of the . . . artist is to remain true to himself and to let the chips fall where they may. In serving his vision of the truth, the artist best serves his nation.[2]

In another speech, Kennedy suggested that cultural achievements were more enduring than political ones, pointing to Athens rather than Jerusalem or Rome as the archetypal city America should be patterned after:

> If we can make our country one of the great schools of civilization (like Athens), then on that achievement will surely rest our claim to the ultimate gratitude of mankind. . . . I am certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we will be remembered not for our victories or defeats in battle or in politics but for our contribution to the human spirit.[3]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 677. [2] Ibid., pp. 926, 843.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 436.

XUM

Not content merely to be a politiciam, Kennedy saw his presidency as an opportunity personally to fulfill his favorite Aristotelian proverb that "happiness is the full use of your powers along lines of excellence in a life affording them scope,"[1] as he branched out in many directions. He would be "A renaissance man whom the world of art / Enlarged and ripened and endowed with balance;"[2] he would reunite intellect and power as the Founding Fathers had done.[3] Out of their union in himself was seen to flow into the wider society a marriage of culture and politics to their mutual enhancement. His "earnest efforts to enhance democracy with high concern for intelligence and art" was credited with bringing American democracy to its finest flower while his belief that "things like music and painting and literature were essential parts of American life" enobled and restored them.[4] Simply inviting artists and writers to attend the inauguration had enhanced their status, said August Heckscher, symbolically affirming that "the intellectual doesn't stand any more at the fringe of national life, an odd and perhaps dangerous person, but is one of the crucial figures in the whole democratic community."[5] And Kennedy's lending the enormous prestige of his office to the personal encouragement of the arts and humanities" through White House performances and the like glamorized their position even more.[6] Yet, as with Kennedy and the celeb-

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 410; AP, The Torch Is Passed, p. 93; Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 220.

[2] Wilbert Snow cited by W. Nicholas Knight, "The Death of J. K.," London Review, Winter 1969-70; mimeographed copy, insert to p. 13.

[3] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of Confidence (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1969), p. 61 and A Thousand Days, p. 928.

[4] Bruce Catton in U.P.I., Four Days, p. 4; Samuel Miller in William M. Fine, ed., That Day With God (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1965), p. 38.

[5] August Hecksher cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 104.

[6] Alvarez himself in Ibid., p. 113.

XUM

rities,[1] the interchange of prestige was twofold, enhancing politicians as well as intellectuals with Kennedy as the broker (mediator) between the two worlds. "The force of his civilized style," said Alvarez, "not only changed the attitude of the general public toward the intellectuals, it also changed the attitude of the intellectuals toward politicians."[2] Hannah Arendt hailed professors being somebodies rather than nobodies as an entirely new status and felt that Kennedy's lofty conception of politics and his highest possible opinion of what he was doing gave that whole realm a "kind of dignity and intellectual splendour."[3]

Many intellectuals, however, were ambivalent about their new status. "The shift from alienation to status, from the role of jester to that of priest, induced in most of them . . . a profound unease,"[4] observed Alvarez. They were flattered by their new place in the royal court, sensing a connection to power and feeling a touch like minor royalty receiving the attensions of the king.[5] They did not cease to criticize Kennedy; indeed, access to Kennedy may have even intensified their criticism of him. Said Norman Podhoretz:

> There was a kind of love-hate relation between Kennedy and the intellectuals. . . . He was criticized very, very severely and largely because one took his claims and pretensions so seriously—in the way that one would not ordinarily take the claims and pretensions of a politician.[6]

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[1] See Chapter II, #2 (in connection with the Inaugural Gala), above.

[2] Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 103.

[3] Hannah Arendt cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 104. The British television program "That Was The Week That Was" in memorializing Kennedy credited him also with making politics respectable; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938 or U.P.I., Four Days, p. 66.

[4] Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 117.

[5] Norman Podhoretz and Norman Mailer cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, pp. 106, 108.

[6] Ibid., p. 115.

According to Schlesinger, even the most radical critics felt a sense of "reluctant kinship" with Kennedy:

> Kennedy was too bright, too attractive, too contemporary to be wholly disowned. He had fortified their own feelings of self-respect. He had made them feel in some way more at home in their own country. "For the first time in our literary life," Mailer told an English interviewer, "it was possible not only to attack the President, you see, but to attack him as a younger brother, with the intensity of a family quarrel."[1]

Yet the intellectuals worried about being taken in, having no place to go outside the family from which to launch criticism which could not be absorbed. "It's rather hard to avoid being acceptable," commented Elizabeth Hardwick.[2] Several intellectuals saw going to dinner with Kennedy and talking about their work merely as a symbolic change, an exercise in sophistication, a chic thing, and they wondered if Kennedy really listened or responded to them.[3] When "the next morning you read that the Seventh Fleet had been sent somewhere in Asia," said Robert Lowell, "you had a funny feeling how unimportant the artist really was: that this was sort of window-dressing and the real government was somewhere else and that something much closer to the Pentagon was really ruling the country."[4]

Other intellectuals worried not merely about their irrelevance but about the subversion of their function in society. Unlike Washington intellectuals who, according to Schlesinger, are not made guilty by the exercise of power--perhaps because they share his modernist faith in the ability of reason to subvert power rather than being subverted by it[5]--

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 687. Mailer also sees Kennedy as a "coldblooded politician" who knew his limits; Alvarez, op. cit., p. 116.

[2] Elizabeth Hardwick cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 107.

[3] Philip Rahv, Elizabeth Hardwick, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Podhoretz cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, pp. 106-108.

[4] Robert Lowell cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 108.

[5] Schlesinger cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 117 and Crisis of Confidence, p. 72.

other intellectuals whose citadel was New York, were leery of power, feeling their acceptability to the center of power as a threat to their critical function.[1] "An intellectual's basic posture is that of critic," said William V. Shannon. "He has no right to be enamored of power."[2] Following Reisman's dictum that American intellectuals did best for their country when they were most against it, many intellectuals made alienation into a kind of creed or imperative.[3] Rapprochement with the President was seen by some as heretical:

> Such people now viewed the Kennedy administration with deep suspicion. The President in their mind was the Tempter, using the allurements of power, charm, wealth, and flattery to seduce their brethren into betraying their vocation and becoming tools of what C. Wright Mills called the "power elite." Kennedy's air of interest in ideas and the arts seemed only the latest ruse to defeat dissent by absorbing it. Those who succumbed to the temptation, the critics argued, would pay a heavy price both in weakening that principled opposition to power which was the duty of an intellectual community and in debasing themselves.[4]

The intellectuals did well to worry, for Kennedy both wanted the intellectual Establishment to be part of America and to use it for his own purposes.[5] "In much the same manner as Julius Caesar, and to much the same end," writes Fairlie, "John Kennedy formed his association with the priesthood of our time, the artists and intellectuals, and carried their oracles, interpreted to his own purposes, to the multitude beyond the palace gates."[6] But his purposes were not theirs. As Fairlie documents, Kennedy often used phrases from Robert Frost that had nothing to do with Frost's life or meanings.[1] The poet would do well to heed Kennedy's advice to keep true to himself and to question power, as, for instance, Reinhold Niebuhr, who refused an invitation to dinner at the White House, so persistently did in exposing the pretensions of the powerful to reason, innocence, and virtue.[2] If they are to maintain their historic authenticity and independence and to avoid being used as modernistic tools or archaic legitimators of the regime, then culture should stay a jade and make no permanent liaisons, artists and intellectuals should remain a bit odd and dangerous and not let their own controversy be defanged by praise, and men of spirit should seek a city of their own and allow no earthly prince to seduce them into the orbit of his vaunted axis mundi. In fact, although some held back, a great many dinner guest artists and intellectuals allowed themselves to become, with varying degrees of enthusiasm or reluctance, legitimators of Kennedy's Camelot while a significant minority of action intellectuals, as we shall see, became its tools.

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[1] E.g., Lionel Trilling cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 111.

[2] William V. Shannon cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 227.

[3] Richard Hofstadter cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 112.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 681.

[5] Norman Mailer cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 109.

[6] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 230.

III

Kennedy invited intellectuals not only to his dinner table but also to his council and conference tables. After his so-called "great talent hunt" as President-elect, Kennedy named intellectuals to several key posts in his administration, developing Roosevelt's brains trust conception further than it had ever been carried before. "No President had ever made such systematic use of the nation's intellectual resources,"[3] claimed Schles-

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 222.

[2] Ibid., p. 229. Fairlie also avers that "power is unintellectual" and disclaims Kennedy's attempt to endow it with enchantment, reason, and virtue; ibid., p. 224. Washington's view is similar; see Chapter I, #1.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 668; cf. Fairlie, op. cit., p. 97.

XUM

inger. While Kennedy kept his "Irish Mafia" for his most personal retainers and appointed some veteran politicians and men of affairs to his Cabinet, sub-Cabinet and special White House posts were a favored niche for the new intellectuals, among whom were numbered fifteen Rhodes scholars.[1] "Washington swarmed with bright young lawyers fresh from law school, eager graduate students, confident professors of the social sciences," writes Novak. "Many who had never thought about government service 'got religion,' the religion of the new class for almost a decade being politics."[2] They were a new elite, the "best and the brightest," and they brought with them their games theory and computer technology and systematic quantitative analysis, which was specially in vogue in Robert McNamara's Pentagon. Preeminent among this elite was a new breed of military intellectuals, many of whom had previously interrupted their academic careers to engage in military strategy and government planning during World War II, especially under the auspices of the Office of Strategic Services and later in the RAND Corporation's think-tank.[2] Wrote The Times Literary Supplement, "The military intellectuals move freely through the corridors of the Pentagon and the State Department rather as the Jesuits through the courts of Madrid and Vienna three centuries ago."[3] They were the new priesthood who would officiate at the marriage of reason and power, under a military banner, while the dinner-guest intellectuals attended the reception.

Yet it was against precisely such a marriage that President Eisenhower had warned the nation in his farewell speech when he cautioned us to "guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex." Eisenhower feared that too close an association between intellectuals and government would be harmful to both:

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[1] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 211; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 41.

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 42; Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 119, 338.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 294.

> (In the universities) a government contract becomes vitually a substitute for intellectual curiosity. . . . The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by federal government, project allocations, and the power of money, is ever present, and is gravely to be regarded. We must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.[1]

The Kennedy Administration succeeded in realizing both dangers: intellectuals became overgovernmentalized and government became overintellectualized. Irving Howe confessed how easy it was for an intellectual to get sidetracked from his own pursuits by the blandishments of government service:

> You can spend your whole life being busy doing all kinds of little chores. It's not a matter of selling out or anything melodramatic like that. It's just that you end up not doing the work for which you have presumably devoted your life.[2]

Norman Podhoretz was concerned about the "almost complete mobilization of the nation's resources behind the Cold War since 1948," a concern which Kennedy privately shared but did nothing about; again, the critical function suffered:

> Almost every major university set up research programmes that were directly connected with foreign policy aims. Almost every writer, professor, scientist, thinker has been involved in conferences, in State Department confabs and trips, and in general there has been a climate created in which the critical function of the intellectual has been suppressed. I don't mean in any conspiratorial way. I don't mean in any conspiratorial way. I mean that it's quite natural, you know--because the money was coming from there.[3]

The critical function suffered also because Kennedy sought "intelligence" rather than "intellect," to use Hofstadter's distinction again, in himself and his men, resulting in a "professional deformation" of the intellectual in government service because he was put "in demand for his specialized skills (as an expert) rather than for his general speculative and critical functions."[1] Thus the reason which would be partner to power was not reason at its fullest but a truncated, modernistic, technical objective reason out of touch with its own depths. It was not a humane wisdom but this narrowed reason which was enthroned by the Kennedy Administration--to the detriment both of the intellectuals who were overly restricted by it and of the government which overly relied upon it.

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[1] Dwight D. Eisenhower cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 108.

[2] Irving Howe cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 114.

[3] Norman Podhoretz, cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 110. For a similar concern on the part of dinner guest intellectuals, see #2, above.

Though the Kennedy operatives were professionals, experts, men of technique who declined to speak in moral terms, theirs became the new morality, for Kennedy gave this "educated class the mantle of morality and progress and leadership,"[2] and at least one theologian added his blessing. Following Rostow, Harvey Cox called Kennedy a "pragmatist" and identified him as an archetypal representative of the pragmatic style of the "secular city" which Cox sought to presage and celebrate, for Kennedy and his men, stripped of the illusions and fuzzy idealism of the past, evinced "just that no-nonsense practicality and interest in workable solutions that is best characterized by the word pragmatism."[3] Following Morton, Cox was impressed by Kennedy's flair for bringing together teams of experts "to study special problems and to work out an immediate coherent policy in a limited field," and Cox makes this method, replete with the isolation of problems and the exclusion of important but not immediately relevant data, the model for his New Man. "Pragmatic technopolitan man," Cox writes, "approaches problems by isolating them from irrelevant considerations, by bringing to bear the knowledge of different specialists, and by getting ready to grapple with a new series of problems when these have been provisionally solved." Religious and moral values are no longer relevant to such a man who, in his self-sufficiency and limited reason, does quite well without them:

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[1] Richard Hofstadter cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 114. For the inttelligence-intellect distinction, see Chapter I, #1 above.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 69, 70, 100.

[3] Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: MacMillan, 1965), p. 62.

> He brackets off the things that cannot be dealt with and deals with those that can. He wastes little time thinking about 'ultimate' or 'religious' questions. He does not ask religious questions because he believes he can handle this world without them.[1]

A moral sense, or at least a sense of mission, was hardly absent, however, for action was valued by the new pragmatic technopolitan elite, and they were to be commended who got on with the doing of what was obviously reasonable and necessary. Comments Novak:

> The inactive, silent ones would become moral if they followed their better-educated, enlightened, professionally trained leaders, who knew what was right and had only to solve the technical problems of getting there. Camelot was a time of pure thoughts and high hopes.[2]

Yet some doubted the sagacity of this kind of brainpower attached to that kind of activism. "The great majority of them are new to power, and their education has included little in the way of training in the uses of power," said Richard Rovere of Kennedy's appointment of intellectuals. "It is a most radical experiment."[3] Hans Morgenthau also criticized the heavy emphasis on academic experience and intellectual expertise in these appointments, observing that "anything goes that is presented cleverly and with assurance." Political gaming, pioneered by the social sciences and refined by the RAND Corporation whence many Kennedy operatives came, was

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[1] Cox, Secular City, p. 63. Cox points out the danger of bracketing too much and actually propounds a new religion (e.g., Bonhoeffer's religionless Christianity) in place of a traditional one or none at all. In later books, Cox lauds the political relevance of fantasy and shows more appreciation for older forms of religion; he told me his admiration for Kennedy waned.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 70.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 225. [4] Ibid., p. 341.

XUM

in special vogue, the ruling methodology especially in McNamara's Pentagon, and it was played with a modernistic intellectual playfulness which bracketed value questions and an archaic intellectual hybris which presumed unquestioned values--symbolized in the ludicrous but accurate image of grown men playing in a sandbox with the actual world at stake and not always clear about the boundaries between the game and real life.[1] Schooled neither in history nor in politics but trained rather, many of them, in the war-time Office of Strategic Services where the illusion was rampant that by accurate intelligence and rational analysis of it the United States could successfully intervene in local situations around the globe, the Kennedy technicians were confident that their intellectual tools could manipulate political problems. "But the precision of their tools . . . was also their undoing," writes Fairlie, for "it led them to ignore the imprecision of political judgment and the intractability of all human affairs."[2] Because of the peculiar kind of brains on which he relied most, Kennedy's belief that "there's nothing like brains, you can't beat brains" led his Administration to develop a very narrow modernistic form of pragmatism, founded and foundering on the reef of a rationalistic positivism. Fairlie notes:

> The positivism of the American mind sets great store by the gathering of information; no country has accumulated so much information about its problems, to the point, it sometimes seems, of paralyzing its will to cope with them. The emphasis on intelligence that persisted after World War II was characteristically American, as was the belief that intelligence had become a function of scholarly research. This was again a part of the atmosphere of expectation. An administration whose members belonged to this century would use the instruments of this century: on the basis of intelligence which was rationally gathered, policy would be rationally determined by men who were rationally disposed. It was a high promise, and the sails of the administration were indeed filled by each breath of the intelligence which it gathered, impelling it forward to yet another operation. What it lacked was an anchor.[3]

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[1] Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, pp. 336-340.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 120, 136.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 194-195, 341.

XUM

One might have expected Kennedy, trained as he was in history and politics, to offset the advice of his technicians. His official biographers continually remind us of his anti-bureaucratic ploys. Sorensen tells us that Kennedy drew out the conflicting opinions of lower-ranking advisors, who would be reticent otherwise to contradict their superiors in front of the President, and occasionally circumvented the bureaucratic chain of command by formulating policy directly with ambassadors or State Department desk men.[1] Schlesinger notes that Kennedy was wary of his key men becoming instruments of the permanent staff and had his most innovative program in foreign affairs, the Peace Corps, located outside the regular executive bureaucracy.[2] Uneasy with the bureaucractic system,[3] Kennedy did not accept the proposals and advice of government agencies routinely and unconditionally but made clear what he himself wanted to know and do, working out various forms of triangulation and discount so that advice would be usable to him. Said Schlesinger, "It was a common experience to see proposals brought to him on which experts had been working for months and then have him ask one or two questions which were extremely relevant if not decisive questions——questions which came out of a larger context and which the experts had not thought of."[4] Even Thomas Griffith continues to see Kennedy as a model of a broader pragmatism: "Presidents with healthy egos learn to recruit minds better trained or more specialized, as Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy pre-eminently did. They borrow ideas but reserve to themselves, as experts in the art of mediating, the pragmatic political judgments of how far they can go and when."[5]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 765-766.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 142, 627.

[3] For Robert Kennedy's anti-bureaucratic style, see Navasky, Kennedy Justice.

[4] Cited by Joan Meyers, John Fitzgerald Kennedy: As We Remember Him (New York: Atheneum, 1965), pp. 193, 129, 195.

[5] Thomas Griffith, "In Defense of Politicians," p. 33.

XUM

Yet it is simply not true that Kennedy thrived on conflicting opinions, charges Fairlie, for he chose from ideas which were basically the same; the significant selection process took place initially in the appointments he made and subsequently in the opinions he chose to hear. Not only could outside advice--such as that buried in the unused task force reports which he had commissioned as President-elect or the impassioned pleas of civil rights leaders--be disregarded or bargained away, but even within his own ranks Kennedy consistently favored those whose advice simplified his own decision-making; Kennedy did not really like inconclusive advice. It was the technicians of the Cabinet who had the President's ear, and they seldom saw fit to question his political judgment nor he theirs. McNamara, for instance, did not go to Kennedy until he was ready for his approval, thus casting the President into a passive role (without protest) and putting military policy virtually beyond effective political control. Dean Rusk, on the other hand, believed that "a Secretary of State has a responsibility . . . not to screen out different points of view so that, when advice goes to the President, the President will know that here is a situation requiring a decision, that there are alternatives, there are choices to be made--including doing nothing--and that there may very well be on-balance judgments."[1] But Kennedy wanted the Department of State to be an instrument of his will rather than refining it, and it was often against such "bureaucrats" as Rusk, aware of the complexities of the world and the importance of measured presidential decision, that Kennedy triangulated, seeking opinions more simplified and straightforward.[2] Liberals in domestic departments were slighted even more. Luther Hodges and Abraham Ribicoff, for instance,

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 333, 332, 150.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 325, 169-72 (for a defense of bureaucracy).

Fairlie notes, "were both politicians--elective politicians--whose political judgment was exactly what John Kennedy needed to balance the unpolitical judgment of the technicians such as Douglas Dillon and Robert McNamara," but they were consistently disregarded. Hodges could never get presidential support for his attempt to impose some sense of public responsibility on big business, nor could Ribicoff, who eventually resigned, divine the degree of presidential commitment to federal aid to public education or any strategy for achieving it.[1] Both the liberalism of these men, who had historic values of their own, and their willingness to raise domestic controversy went against the grain, for, as Kimball points out, "the temper of the inner Kennedy circle was one of distrust of anything short of total loyalty to the leader, and "liberals" were suspected of too passionate dedication to pet programs and principles."[2] By contrast, what was distinctively and seriously absent in the preferred Kennedy method of decision-making was "any genuine concern for values or interests" by which the electorate presumably made its political choices but which it was now being asked to surrender--in reliance upon men with the intellectual equipment and rational disposition to make "value-free" choices on behalf of the people in an alleged general interest.[3] Kennedy's familiar obsession with activity and brevity and quickness of response, his preference for "crisp, taut, to-the-point analyses," also short-cutted much consideration of values. "Kennedy's emphasis on swiftness--terse statements, quick strides from one problem to the next--resulted at times in inadequate consideration of alternatives,"[4] said Louis Koenig. Even Schlesinger admits that "the New Frontier put a premium on quick, tough, laconic, decided people; it was easily exasperated by more meditative types," such as old New Dealer Chester Bowles, who was eventually shelved.[1] What Kennedy seems not to have understood is that qualities even more valuable than intelligence and competence, especially the quality of "political judgment—at its highest political wisdom—is often to be found . . . in men who digress, or who are slow, or who have no ready point to make, but who are feeling their way to an unformed doubt." Rather, the Kennedy method left very little room for doubt, even for the obstruction of a poor plan, as he sought a Presidency "armed to secure the prompt execution of a single Presidential will uninterrupted by advice or admonition."[2]

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 168, 341. For Kennedy's cosmocratic rather than bureaucratic attack on big business, see Chapter VI, #3, below.

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 45.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 342.

[4] Ibid., pp. 183 (Roger Hilsman), 173 (Louis Koenig).

It is not the case, however, that the Kennedy men were actually value-free as they claimed in their more modernistic moments, for Kennedy had shackled himself to the unexamined archaic ideology of the Cold War in his own mind, by his appointments, and through the advice he favored.[3] Drawing men both from the RAND Corporation, which bore the dual impress of the gladiator and the philosopher, and from the Office of Strategic Services—"a remarkable institution, half cops and robbers, half faculty meeting," whose graduates had provided most of the personnel for university area studies—the New Frontier joined physical bravado to intellectual bravura, matching the archaic toughness and modernistic intelligence without historic values which was Kennedy's own stance.[4]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 406; see Chapter VI, #1, below.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 167, 173.

[3] For appointment of Cold Warriors, see Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 125-127. For attempts to thaw the Cold War, see Chapter VI, #4.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 135, 229; see Chapter I, #1, above.

In the end, Kennedy's will prevailed because he was the king, and a rather archaic king at that. Those who fared best in his administration were those most devoted to him, those who were disciplined and unemotional and didn't talk back, those whose "ineffable self-assurance," like Kennedy's, led them to trust in their own unquestioned competence, to find splendid joy in their own powers, and to feel the approval of their own hearts which great men feel quite apart from success on any one else's terms[1]--a stance perhaps best epitomized by McGeorge Bundy whose "instinctive commitment to the Establishment" had tempered and disciplined him not to question too deeply any current orthodoxy as he wielded great power from his "little State Department" within the White House (another Kennedy shortcut around the bureaucratic and independent State Department).[2] "Those who did not agree with the Kennedy thoughts or did not like the Kennedy technique or found other objections simply did not survive," wrote Hugh Sidey. "The prince often gets to hear what he wants to hear," said Paul Samuelson, and I. F. Stone, who was always raising thorny issues in his newsletter, rued that "the atmosphere of Washington . . . is like that of a reigning monarch's court."[3] When not only the historic concern for graded values is dismissed but even the modernistic entertainment of all ideas and interests as of equal value is subverted by an archaic devotion to one man as instruments of his mind and will, generating options without passion in a very reduced frame, the "atmosphere ceases to be strictly political," concludes Fairlie, "and becomes that of a court, call it Camelot or not."[4]

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[1] Following Fairlie (Kennedy Promise, pp. 155-159), I here liken the mentality of Kennedy's men to that of heroes in John Buchan's novels.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 176. See also David Halberstam, "The Very Expensive Education of McGeorge Bundy," Harper's, July 1969, pp. 21-41. or The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House, 1969, 1971, 1972).

[3] Cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 156, 168, 209. [4] Ibid. p. 168.

In sum, the "vulgar pragmatism," as Abraham Kaplan called it, of the Kennedy administration employed a truncated modernistic reason in an archaic militaristic frame with little restraint from historic values. On the modernistic side, it was characterized by the ideal of success, in which "competitive success is taken to be at once the sign and substance of worth," the ideal of efficiency, in which "important values are left out of the accounting," the ideal of scientism, in which "special instruments and techniques are taken to be the method itself," and the ideal of quantification, in which "nothing is so real as a measurable quantity." On the archaic side, it emphasizes "toughness" and "tough-mindedness," a manliness which is "successful, efficient, even ruthless" and concerned lest it ever "go soft" (or appear to go soft) on policy. And in the minimization of an historic dimension, "morality was transformed into no more than morale."[1] The Kennedy method had a pretension to being scientific, yet, by contrast, a genuine scientific method is truly open-ended without authoritarian restriction, is aware of its own assumptions and limitations, and does not presume to prescribe action but only to describe a slice of reality. Comments Fairlie:

> If only it (the Kennedy method) had been scientific, the scientism of the intellectuals at the Department of Defense would not have been allowed to reign; and no one would have imagined that efficiency could be found in process; options would not have been confused with choice, and success, which is easy to come by, would not have been understood as achievement; quantification would not have been thought to be the measurement of a problem; and tough-mindedness would not have been regarded as a proof of strength.[2]

As it was, Kennedy used science to run his government, just as he used arts and letters to decorate occasions of state and personalized publicity to woo public opinion, for purposes not their own which perverted them.

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[1] Abraham Kaplan cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 363.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 363.

If a completely modern society would foster disparate branches of culture autonomously pursuing a multiplicity of purposes and an historic society would foster co-ordinate branches of culture theonomously pursuing a harmony of purposes and an archaic society would foster fused branches of culture heteronomously pursuing a single national purpose,[1] then clearly Kennedy was attempting to move American society in an archaic direction as he sought to lead the whole nation from his Camelot court. The Kennedys "would rule its arts, they would rule its science, they would rule its letters, they would rule its fashion, they would rule its taste; and all to create in the society an elevated sense of national purpose, "says Fairlie, and then he reminds us that "it is the habit of our rulers to excite such purpose only when they want us to do battle for them, to kill and be killed."[2] That was the real snake amid Camelot's flowers. The danger lay not simply in the attempt to centralize all aspects of culture under the White House roof nor in the attempt to make his Washington the single _axis mundi_ but even more in the fact that such unity, like that of archaic empires, was based on a militaristic nationalism which required the sacrifice of divergent purposes, including the sacrifice of intellect, in order to achieve its ends and exalt itself at their expense. Writes Fairlie:

> On the New Frontier there would be built a new city, wondrous to behold, in which all of human endeavor--even scholarship, even art, even music--would have its appointed place, and its opportunity to serve. There happiness would be pursued, strenuously and heroically; there men would risk and strive; there each would be at his moral best. In modern times, the promise was without parallel; the claim was unlimited. Excellence would be sought in all phases of the nation's life, and the President would do a good deal to set the tone. This was the language of personal emperorship, and its motive was to be found in a political philosophy which exalted the power of the state.[3]

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[1] For autonomy, theonomy, and heteronomy, see the Introduction, #3.

[2] Fairlie, _Kennedy Promise_, pp. 7-8.

[3] _Ibid_., pp. 84-85.

Only time and the Constitution and history itself--accompanied by a few voices in the wilderness who sensed the danger—could put effective limits on such an archaic reign. In the end, an assassin's bullet brought it to an end. Yet even this was not the end, for Kennedy's death left his pragmatic method in being among his advisers whom Johnson retained, his concern for arts and letters sorely missed in his less sophisticated successor, and an adulation for himself and for the surviving Kennedys which was further intensified by his death, making the Camelot lost, remembered, perhaps to come again, even more glorious than the Camelot which, for one brief shining moment, was.

CHAPTER V

CONTEMPEROR

New Man of this new day, he shamed us all
By keeping faith with the American dream,
He trusted it and labored to install
An order that would bring the sorry scheme
Of old world hatreds to an end. Stars mourn
That such a radiant soul from earth was torn.
--Wilbert Snow

John Kennedy presented himself as the "Contemperor," if I may coin a word, the man who was completely "with the times," who embodied the new age and could bring it in. He was, said Adlai Stevenson, the "contemporary man," and The New York Times called him the "man of his generation."[1] Like Jesus Christ for Christian revelation, Kennedy was seen as a *keryx*, the herald of a new age, bringing good news of divine liberation, favor, and government to a weary world from a radiant world beyond.[2] With Schlesinger as his prophet, predicting that the right time (*kairos*) had come for a resurgence of the public interest in a new key,[3] Kennedy proclaimed a new era. "The old era is ending," Kennedy told the Democratic National Convention following his nomination. "The harsh facts of the matter are that we stand on a new frontier at a turning point in history." The awakening of new nations is releasing more energy than atomic fission, Kennedy told his Los Angeles audience; "all over the world . . . young men are coming to power, men who are not bound by the traditions of the past . . . (nor meshed in) the old slogans, delusions, and suspicions."[1] And Kennedy, at forty-three and filled with new ideas, willed to be chief among these new young leaders. Stevenson and the old New Dealers eventually accepted the changing of the guard--"like the Yorks giving way to the Tudors," as Schlesinger put it--after Kennedy received the Democratic nomination,[2] and Kennedy's election meant that the oldest President in the twentieth century would be succeeded by the youngest. "Let the word go forth," Kennedy had said in his Inaugural Address, "that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans, born in this century," and his inauguration also inaugurated the Kennedy years and marked the virtual beginning of the exciting decade of the Sixties.[3] In the minds of many, Kennedy's accession presaged a new era--for the nation, for the world, for the planet.

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[1] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 111; U.P.I., *Four Days*, p. 132.

[2] See Mark 1:14; Luke 1:78, 2:13-14; 4:18-19; Matthew 2:9.

[3] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 25.

Of course, it was much easier to annunicate a new era, as Contemperor, than to accomplish the programs which would give it substance. Even though the New Frontier was now official reality and could not be simply disregarded as it had been by much of the electorate during Kennedy's campaign,[4] it continued to meet resistance, not only from the general intractability of the world to any idealistic schemes for changing it or from the reluctance of the people or the Congress or our allies to venture and sacrifice under Kennedy's leadership, but also from contradictions within Kennedy himself. Kennedy was a fatalist who created optimism. His rhetoric was lofty, but his politics was cautious. He gave the impression that anything was possible but repeatedly said he could not move very far or very fast on particular issues. He was a political wizard in the narrow sense of counting votes but could not get his major bills through Congress. He had a pragmatic perspective, confidence, and method appropriate for problem-solving but did not solve many problems other than some of those he created. Modernistically, he rejected Cold War ideology but never moved far from it, in part, because he relied, as we have seen, on intellectual advisors who conducted modernistic operations within an archaic militaristic frame.[1] Despite contradictions and setbacks, however, Kennedy retained his reputation as a promising Contemperor: the Daring Adventurer, the Hope of the Young around the world, the Great Initiator at home, the Enlightened Pragmatist in foreign policy, the Man of Confidence withal.

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 64.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 621. The shift was particularly apparent at Eleanor Roosevelt's funeral in 1962, the "last assembly" of the old New Dealers.

[3] Christians date time A.D., *Anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord, measuring distance from Jesus' birth as the start of a new age. In the United States, Presidential proclamations are dated both in the year of our Lord and in the year of the Independence of the United States of America, but, less formally, Americans locate events within decades and presidential administrations. Time being continuous, its periodization always reflects a religious interpretation of significance (Durkheim, Troeltsch).

[4] See Chapter I, #2, above.

I

As the Daring Adventurer, Kennedy was seen as an untrammeled twentieth century man and an inspiration to government and society. Norman Podhoretz stressed Kennedy's contemporaneity:

> Kennedy as a symbolic figure represented, I suppose unconsciously for most people, consciously for some, the first major public figure who was genuinely of our time. One felt him to be a contemporary. He was a man who was post-Fredd, post-Einstein, post-Marx; he was a man who lived in the twentieth century. What I mean is that there is no such person as the public figure that most American politicians pretend to be. This is a mythological personage which is based on all kinds of nineteenth century ideals, small town, rural--Lyndon Johnson, for example, seems to project that kind of image. Kennedy was clearly a twentieth century, sophisticated, urban man.[2]

Theologian Van Harvey goes a step further, seeing Kennedy as a paradigmatic ideal twentieth century man, similar in function to Jesus as the Christ. He writes:

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[1] See Chapter IV, #3, above.

[2] Norman Podhoretz cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, pp. 102-103.

> John Kennedy was obviously more than a chief executive. To countless numbers of people, he was also the symbol of a new style of patriotism and leadership. To an age that had known two world wars and was disillusioned by their aftermaths, the President represented a new possibility for understanding political involvement. A hero in war, a man of reason, wit, self-confidence, tolerance, urbanity, and realism, he seemed to many to epitomize the ideal of the twentieth century man.[1]

An an exemplary person, Kennedy provided an ideal for others and gave them a new sense of reality and hope. Writes Alvarez: "Kennedy provided a kind of ideal. . . . There was this image of the beautiful Kennedys, with their intelligence, stylishness, toughness, and enlightened glow. So the nature of reality began to seem, despite everything, full of possibilities."[2]

Kennedy's sense of adventure, daring, and hope was contagious. His style weighed upon our spirits encouraging, in contrast to the "silent generation" of the Eisenhower years, an "activist" decade.[3] "John Kennedy's enthusiasm for activity was infectious," writes Fairlie. "The Kennedys would not sit still in the White House, neither the two brothers nor those whom they persuaded to serve them."[4] One cannot speak here of an "idealism" spurring principled action but only of a modernistic "activism" willing to listen to anything in a free market of ideas and ready to do just about anything in an experimental frame. "Let it be clear," President Kennedy said in his first State of the Union message, "that this Administration recognizes the value of dissent and daring--that we greet healthy controversy as the hallmark of healthy change," and, in keeping with the spirit of the new administration, Robert Kennedy's Hickory Hill seminars for cabinet members encouraged the disputatious influx of fresh ideas.[1] According to Schlesinger, Kennedy's openness to criticism reversed the anti-intellectualism of the Fifties when it was considered treasonous in some quarters to question the American way of life; his own "sweeping criticisms" of America helped to spark an outpouring of protest literature unmatched since the Thirties, and his wit encouraged a revival of humour.[2] The whole nation was inspired by Kennedy's style, Schlesinger fancied:

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[1] Van Harvey, The Historian and the Believer, p. 254.

[2] Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 124.

[3] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 3.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 6.

> The combination of self-criticism, wit, and ideas made up, I think, a large part of the spirit of the New Frontier. It informed the processes of government, sparkled through evenings at the White House and around town, refreshed and enlivened the world of journalism, stimulated the universities, kindled the hopes of the young and presented the nation with a new conception of itself and its potentialities. . . . Kennedy taught the country the possibilities of a new national style.[3]

The first days of the Kennedy Administration were especially imbued with a youthful, adventurous spirit; it was an exciting and inspiring time. The pace was frenetic. Everyone came early and stayed late. "Those were the days," said Robert Kennedy with a touch of irony, "when we thought we were succeeding because of all the stories of how hard everyone was working," a comment which reflects Americans' "extraordinary faith in the power of action" and Kennedy's continuing zeal for activity at the same time as it distances itself a bit from it.[4] Evenings, too, were full--with dancing till three in the morning on one occasion. The glow of the White House lit up the whole city of Washington in the view of the Kennedyites; "sometimes they almost sound as if they invented the town," observed Time.[5] The currents of vitality radiated out of the White House, through the government, and created a sense of vast possibility. Euphoria reigned; we thought for a moment, writes Schlesinger, "that the world was plastic and the future unlimited."[1]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 638, 643. [2] Ibid., pp. 666-668.

[3] Ibid., p. 669.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 6; Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 116. Novak notes our "ritual response" to evil as: "What can we do about it?"

[5] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 97.

This initial sense of euphoria crashed against the reef of the real world in the fourth month of the Kennedy Administration in the Bay of Pigs debacle and was never fully recovered.[2] But a good deal of it was retained in Kennedy's calling the nation to "move forward, with the full speed of freedom, in the exciting adventure of space."[3] Perhaps nowhere more than in the space program did Kennedy evoke a sense of adventure, of derring-do, telling us we were standing on the edge of a great new era and beckoning us to surmount the wall of space to the wonders beyond. In explaining why the United States was engaged in space exploration, Kennedy said in a speech at Rice University: "Just as the United States was founded by energy and vision and achieved world leadership by riding the first waves of each new age--the industrial revolution, modern invention, and nuclear power--so this generation of Americans intends to be 'the world's leading space-faring nation.'"[4] In drumming up support for the space program, Kennedy again used the rhetoric of challenge and sacrifice, converting a scientific experiment in which few would be directly involved into a national mission involving a personal pledge of support from all and redounding to the pride of the entire nation.[5] In justifying the choice of the moon, he appealed to archaic considerations of testing and proving ourselves under hardship and impressing mankind with our superiority as well as the modernistic lure of novelty and exploration rather than considering what this stunt would actually accomplish in comparison with other programs competing with it for funds on the basis of prioritized historic values. He said:

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 195, 201-202, 626; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 279.

[2] For the Bay of Pigs invasion, see Chapter VI, #1.

[3] John Kennedy cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 13.

[4] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 594. This is Sorensen's paraphrase.

[5] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 13.

> We choose to go to the moon in this decade not because it is easy but because it is hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure our energies and skills.
>
> Many years ago the great British explorer George Mallory, who was to die on Mount Everest, was asked why did he want to climb it, and he said, "Because it is there."
>
> Well, space is there, and . . . the moon and the planets are there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there.[1]

Instead of seeing the space program as a money drain diminishing other programs, Kennedy saw "shooting for the moon" as just the inspiration and proof of our prowess that we needed to tackle all our other problems of poverty, ignorance, discrimination, disease, war, etc.[2] There was with Kennedy the sense of the impossible dream made possible. Recalling lines from Shaw's "Back to Methusaleh" before the Irish Parliament, Kennedy said, in what became his epitaph and a themesong for his brothers: "You see things; and you say 'Why?' But I dream of things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'"[3]

It is perhaps significant that it was the snake who had this line in Shaw's play, the snake who is always calling man into pretensions which obfuscate his limits. In the space program, Kennedy was at his most modernistic, espousing a not-uncommon technologism which expects a purely technical feat to magically make the political world and its problems less intractable.[4] It is also clear that without the archaic Cold War competition with Russia--which had gotten Sputnik up first and threatened to outdo us in appearances (even if actually doing us in was a fairly remote possibility)--Kennedy would not have been able to lure us into space adventure. What was lacking, again, in Kennedy's space debut--as in his activism and dreaming and the Bay of Pigs misadventure which ended the initial euphoria--was an anchorage in historic ideals, a rootage in the historic American dream, an historic sense of discrimination, which can tell the difference between commitment and enthusiasm, between imagination and foolhardiness, between genuine progress and mere novelty.

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[1] John Kennedy cited by Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 594.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 13.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 811.

[4] Likewise, the Green Revolution failed to solve world hunger, in part, because unchanged social structures prevented it from reaching the poor; "old world hatreds" are entrenched and not easily dispelled by feat or fiat.

II

As Hope of the Young, Kennedy made his most penetrating appeal to those young men and women coming of age in the contemporary world. "Nothing in the Kennedy years," notes Schlesinger, "was more spectacular than the transformation of American youth."[1] No longer the "silent generation" hamstrung by its own sense of impotence, the young became increasingly active in politics, helped by their identification with Kennedy. The Civil Service Commission reported a great increase in college graduates wanting to work for the government.[2] Kennedy's highest hope was to inspire young men with a lofty sense of political mission. "He never tired of encouraging young men and women to enter politics and public service," wrote Sorensen, "and by his example, I believe, he worked a profound change in this nation's respect for that calling."[3]

The Peace Corps was the most dramatic outlet for youthful idealism that Kennedy provided, the clearest expression of the distinctive spirit of the New Frontier, and it came to occupy a place in American mythology, according to its associate director Harris Wofford, "somewhere between the Boy Scouts and motherhood."[1] The President considered volunteering for the Peace Corps to be the highest response to the injunction to sacrifice in his Inaugural Address, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Dedication was the hallmark of the Peace Corps, intended, in part, to match the religious dedication of young Communists to their system.[2] Kennedy said in a campaign speech; "I want to demonstrate to Mr. Khrushchev and others that a new generation of Americans has taken over this country,...... young Americans who will serve the cause of freedom as servants of peace around the world, working for freedom as the communists work for their system."[3] One volunteer, who, in fact, was subsequently killed in a plane crash, used the religious phraseology of giving his life in service as a preferable equivalent to the soldier's dedication, setting the religion of brotherhood over against the religion of war. "Should it come to it," he said, "I would rather give my life trying to help someone than to have to give my life looking down a gun barrel at them."[4]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 678. [2] Ibid.,

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 373. See Chapter IV, #2, above.

The Peace Corps also contributed to Kennedy's impact abroad, especially in underdeveloped countries; Kennedy was very identified with the program--in some places, Peace Corps volunteers were known as "Kennedy's children," and among some African tribesmen any American visitor was called "Kennedy." With a degree of illusion that underrated the real continuing presence of American capitalists in Latin America, U. S. Ambassador to Venezuela, Allan Stewart, told Schlesinger:

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 284.

[2] For "voluntary totalitarianism," see Chapters I, #2 and II, #3.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 558.

[4] Ibid., p. 561. For the two religions, see Weber, From Max Weber, p. 335.

> It has been wonderful here. It has worked miracles in changing the Venezuelan image of North Americans. Before the Peace Corps, the only Americans the poor Venezuelans ever saw were riding around in Cadillacs. They supposed them all to be rich, selfish, callous, reactionary. The Peace Corps has shown them an entirely different kind of American. It is transforming the whole theory they have of the United States.[1]

The Alliance for Progress with Latin America also raised hopes and raised Kennedy's popularity. A Schlesinger memo set the stage for him to come on as a miracle-worker of the new age: "People are looking on JFK as a reincarnation of FDR. To a surprising degree, the slate has been wiped clean of past neglect and error. The atmosphere is set for miracles."[2] And Kennedy responded with moving rhetoric about transforming the American continent "into a vast crucible of revolutionary ideas" and warned that "those who make peaceful revolution impossible make violent revolution inevitable."[3] Although very little progress was made by the Alliance for Progress, being characterized by "slogans without substance and programs without clear purpose" in an atmosphere of "easy optimism and excessive ardor,"[4] Kennedy "made an extraordinary impression," said Lleras Camargo of Columbia, "upon the old hardened crust of Latin American society."[5] African leaders were also impressed with Kennedy. Wrote Samuel Ibo after Meeting Kennedy: "With Kennedy there were sparks. You would meet him and 'shoo, shoo,' sparks and electricity would be shooting all over."[6] Indians developed a "tremendous admiration" for the American President, with young Indians, especially, fixing their hopes on him; a poll by Asia magazine found Kennedy the "most admired world figure," well ahead of Nehru.[7] In Europe also, the young were attracted to Kennedy. "He spoke to us for the first time in the language of the present generation,"[1] wrote Countess Marion Dönhoff in *Die Zeit*. Younger politicians abroad imitated Kennedy's style and allowed their publicists to call them "another Kennedy." Kennedy was becoming a leader of the young around the world.[2]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 560 (italics mine).

[2] Ibid., p. 178 [3] Ibid., pp. 193, 722.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 140, 273, (citing Abraham Lowenthal).

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 912. [6] Ibid., p. 516.

[7] Ibid., pp. 490-491; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 654.

Whenever Kennedy would run into trouble in domestic politics, Fairlie tells us, he would rush off to visit his global constituents, who looked to him for no actual leadership but only for symbolic inspiration, and they would enthusiastically cheer him and his movie star wife, restoring his image.[3] When Kennedy died, his international devotees often outdid Americans in their memorialization of him.[4] Haile Selassie, however, said that Ethiopia needed no new Kennedy monument, (not only because his poor country could not afford one, but also) because the President's memory was enshrined in the Peace Corps.[5] That, too, is a pregnant statement, for the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress were designed to be monumental rather than effective, to annunciate the good in global terms rather than to painstakingly accomplish it amid all the complexities of language, custom, political and social structure, and national interests--as well as technical deficiencies and low morale (AID officials were known to rate Latin American countries like baseball teams)--of individual nations about which our new missionaries and even our foreign policy "experts" themselves were often frightfully ignorant or embarrassingly negligent.[6]

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[1] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 811.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 569, 811; Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 649 and *Kennedy Legacy*, p. 126.

[3] Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, p. 138. See Chapters IV, #1 and VI, #5.

[4] See Chapter VIII, #2.

[5] Manchester, *Death*, p. 571.

[6] Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, pp. 271-284.

There is no reason to denigrate the historic commitment of many Peace Corps volunteers nor to deny that "thousands of persons who were first politically 'awakened' by the Peace Corps, VISTA and other Kennedy programs that have now 'failed' are still creatively at work."[1] But it is also clear, despite American pretensions to innocence, that the Peace Corps was fueled also by dedication to archaic American nationalism, was intended to spread the American value of "freedom" and to impose it on others whether it made sense in their cultures or not, and was designed to be an instrument of American foreign policy in competition with the Communists at the outposts of empire. For such purposes, the Peace Corps may seem--in contrast to the rigorously trained men whom Sparta and Britain sent out, with the state as their mistress, to be tools in empire-building--a "lamentably frivolous experiment," sending off virtually as tourists "a battalion of cheery, crew-cut kids who two years ago hopped off their drug store stools and hurried around the world to wage peace."[2] But, Fairlie concludes, "the American people were persuaded that they could stand on the walls of freedom across the world, enjoying the sensation of empire, exalted by the mission which had fallen to them, but never to bear the pain."[3] When costs mounted, enthusiasm waned. In the end, it is less for whatever historic good it accomplished or for the archaic struggle it sought to further and more for the exciting modernistic adventure that the Peace Corps made possible that it is remembered, having been good for the character of those who encountered a modicum of hardship thereby and even better for Kennedy's image as the contemporary world-wide Hope of the Young.

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 252.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 285. [3] Ibid., p. 288.

XUM

III

As the Great Initiator, Kennedy sought to unify the country behind his bold leadership. As usual, his first and most potent initiative was in the area of public relations. Kennedy was mighty popular at home as well as abroad as the media built him up. "He had a gay magic as a political speaker, most of it as carefully contrived as it seemed spontaneous," wrote James Reston; "he was good at the arts of Hollywood and Madison Avenue."[1] With his "Life-Time smile," this "young Apollo of the picture page,"[2] as one poet put it--this "Greek runner on whom the people loved to look / Proconsul with a youthful mind and heart,"[3] this "young chief with the smile, the radiant face / The winning way that turned a marvelous race / Into sublimer paths"[4]--worked marvels through public relations. Writes Neustadt, "In the three months after his election, Kennedy transformed himself from 'pushy,' 'young,' 'Catholic' into President-of-all-the-people, widening and deepening acceptance of his presidency all out of proportion to the election returns."[5]. Wrote Sorensen in the same vein:

> John Kennedy deliberately set out with the aid of all the image-making media to make his Presidency stand for excellence. . . . Within three months of his Inauguration--despite clashes with the medical lobby, the real estate lobby, the billboard lobby, the truckers, the publishers, the retailers, and others, including his own church--he had become a nationally admired figure, his television press conferences had become household institutions, and his religion, his youth, and his narrow margin of victory were no longer objects of suspicion.[6]

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[1] James Reston, "What Was Killed Was Not Only the President but the Promise," in John F. Kennedy and the New Frontier, ed. by Aida diPace Donald (New York: Hill & Wang, 1966), p. 227.

[2] G. S. Fraser, "Instead of an Elegy," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 31.

[3] Wilbert Snow cited by Knight, "The Death of J. K.," p. 19.

[4] John Masefield cited by U.P.I., Four Days, p. 135.

[5] Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960, 1968), p. 205.

[6] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, pp. 122, 187.

XUM

Kennedy sought to personalize the presidency through publicity:

> Kennedy used his personal White House staff, his personal press conferences, his trips, television addresses, and telephone to spread his influence wide and deep. His personal identification with the office and its problems gave more Americans, particularly the young, a new and better grasp of what the presidency could mean for our country.[1]

Kennedy gave nine major television reports to the nation and averaged twenty-one press conferences a year, many of them televised. "The conferences offered a showcase," writes Schlesinger, "for a number of his most characteristic qualities--the intellectual speed and vivacity, the remarkable mastery of the data of government, the terse self-mocking wit, the exhilarating personal command."[2] Indeed, Kennedy prepared elaborately for press conferences, which became a "strictly regulated liturgical ceremonial" theatrically designed to appeal directly to public opinion, and he handled them masterfully, giving an impression of erudition and conviction and never appearing at a loss. "He either overwhelmed you with decimal points or disarmed you with a smile and a wisecrack," observed Reston.[3] Kennedy not only dominated but also managed the news, not surely in an obvious contrivance and restriction--for Kennedy's relations with the press were "open to the point of porosity"[4]--but through the reporters openness to him, through their responsiveness to the social flattery with which he beguiled them, through their concern for the already great burdens of his office (without their criticisms added on) which he shared with publishers over lunch, and, in Washington itself, through the absence of any other show in town. Reporters were left, according to Arthur Krock, "in a state of protracted enchantment evoked by the President's charm and the awesome aura of his office."[1] With the President exercising a "virtual monopoly of the media" and with reporters as sycophants, it is small wonder that the populace was led to worship Kennedy, his every exposure, as with primitive symbols, increasing his potency.[2]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 187.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 658, 656.

[3] James Reston cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 214.

[4] William L. Rivers, "The Press and the Assassination," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 54. "Never in history," asserts Rivers, "have so many reporters been so free to talk with the President and to explore the Presidency."

Without taking pointed stands on issues, Kennedy both endeared himself to the people and changed the atmosphere of the nation, according to his admirers. Wrote Neustadt:

> With a minimum of preaching, of emotional appeal or of self-justification, even explanation, he managed to touch millions in their private lives, not only at home but emphatically abroad. Perhaps his very coolness helped him do it. Perhaps his very vigor, family, fortune, sense of fun, manners, taste, and sportsmanship, his evident enjoyment of life and of the job made him the heart's desire of all sorts of people everywhere, not least among the young. At any rate, we know now that he managed in his years to make enormous impact on a world-wide audience, building an extraordinary base of public interest and affection (interspersed, of course, with doubters and detractors).[3]

From this base, Kennedy contemporized the world. According to Bruce Catton, he came to symbolize that moment of change from one era to the next, from pre-occupation with immediate nasty problems to exploring a limitless future, not because he caused it but because he fitted in to it; not because of what he did but simply because of what he was.[4] Although he sees events as having more to do with stirring controversy than a President, Neustadt sees the President as helping "to shape the meaning of events, the terms of discourse, the attention paid, and the noise level,"[5] and he asserts that "Kennedy got the country moving again and raised controversies . . . by 1963 . ... that would have been unthinkable or at least "unAmerican" during the later Eisenhower years."[1]

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[1] Arthur Krock cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 219 (212-220).

[2] See Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 254 and Chapter IV, #1, above.

[3] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 206.

[4] Bruce Catton, "Introduction" to U.P.I., Four Days, p. 4.

[5] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 210. For the "enormous power" in this high priestly function, see Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 255-257 and Chapter III, #1, above.

Kennedy's spiritual impact on the nation was phenomenal if we believe his toadeaters. According to Schlesinger, Kennedy "subtly entered and transformed national expectations and attitudes" toward Negro rights; "quietly created an atmosphere where change, when it came, would seem no longer an upheaval but the inexorable unfolding of the promise of American life;" so "subtly permeated national attitudes and so quietly penetrated individual lives that no one realized how much he had changed things until his time was over," leading the age of Kennedy to be seen, in retrospect, as "a time of quite extraordinary transformation of national values and purposes so far reaching as to make the America of the Sixties considerably different from the America of the Fifties."[2] Kennedy "accomplished" new hope for peace on earth, transformed the American spirit, gave vision and hope;[3] he changed our way of looking, not structures;[4] he left us an attitude of looking ahead and believing the future would set us free;[5] his greatest accomplishment was that he gave us the strength to believe that we were better than we had thought.[6]

Kennedy wrought this tremendous spiritual transformation, not through words and deeds, but through his image--which was "packed with a whole set of intellectual implications which were preparing the nation for legislative change[7]--his personality, example, and dramatic actions. It

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[1] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 210.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 655, 881. [3] Ibid., p. 940.

[4] White, Making President 1964, p. 39. [5] Catton, Four Days, p. 3.

[6] Richard Goodwin, "Frontispiece" to The Religious Views of President John F. Kennedy, ed. Nicholas Schneider.

[7] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 666.

XUM

was Kennedy's personality rather than his words that had such a potent impact and his example rather than admonitions that bore fruit. In educating the public, Schlesinger tells us, Kennedy knew that reason was not enough and "fell back on his most powerful weapon--himself; on his own willingness to attest by example his faith in American rationality and decency" even in his decision to go to Dallas.[1] Rather than being "some large vapid figure of authority whom one believed in, as some sort of secular pope" (or being a forceful "secular pope" like Dag Hammarskjöld),[2] Kennedy exercised his secular papacy by defining reality through dramatic action, according to Norman Mailer, "He was always defining the nature of reality by his actions, which is, I think, his claim on greatness as a president: he helped establish a sense of reality for us, a very interesting, imaginative, contradictory sense of reality."[3]

But when it came to political actions or public stands on issues, to changing political realities rather than defining reality in general, Kennedy was very reticent, especially in the earlier years of his Presidency. Kennedy and his band combined "courageous expectations" with "cautious operations;" his promise of "vigorous" presidential leadership ended up being "realistic" instead.[4] Kennedy was liberal enough in rhetoric to lure liberals and cautious enough in deeds to reassure conservatives; he was surely not liberal to the point of indiscretion, being uncommitted to liberalism. His presidential campaign and Inaugural Address led people to expect great things from him. He had put himself forward as a "strong President" who would exercise moral leadership and gave promise, in a campaign speech to the National Press Club, of matching words with deeds and even stepping on a few toes:

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 693.

[2] Ibid., p. 432. Schlesinger tells us that Hammarskjöld, who once called himself "secular Pope" in a talk with W. H. Auden, acted independently when necessary "with the resourcefulness of a bureaucrat and the fervor of a saint" moved by a "quasi-messianic passion" rooted in Christian mysticism.

[3] Norman Mailer cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 124. Mailer refers especially to the existential risk of going to Dallas as an act of faith.

[4] Douglass Cater, "The Do-It-Yourself Nature of Presidential Power," in John F. Kennedy and the New Frontier, pp. 215-216.

> In the challenging revolutionary Sixties, the American Presidency will demand more than ringing manifestoes issued from the rear of the battle. It will demand that the President place himself in the very thick of the fight, that he care passionately about the fate of the people he leads, that he be willing to serve them at the risk of incurring their momentary displeasure.[1]

On the basis of such rhetoric, one might have expected Kennedy to be the Voice of the People, leading them with passionate determination, but Kennedy backed down from being the people's trumpet and worried about the impact of their displeasure on his popularity. Rather than playing the role of Voice of the People, he concentrated on preparing for it by winning the admiration and confidence of the country, economizing appearances, and seeing which way the tides were running.[2]

Kennedy and his friends explained his reticence as a strategic good, an economy of effort. Passionate speaking was to be avoided because it was either impotent or dangerous. Kennedy believed that words have impact only at great moments of history, and even then he doubted whether words, however winged, could change the world. Even at times of great crisis, Kennedy did not aim at spell-binding oratory. His speech at the height of the Cuban missile crisis was laconic rather than lofty, a spare and dry two-minute announcement that turned away his largest and most attentive audience. With his rationalist's mistrust of emotions and scorn for histrionics,

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[1] Cater, "Do-It-Yourself Presidential Power," p. 213. Sidney Hyman sees this speech falling into the "charismatic school of Presidential inspiration."

[2] For the role of Voice of the People and the conditions which make it effective, see Rossiter, American Presidency, pp. 30-31 and Chapter III, #2.

Kennedy was disturbed by the unexpectedly enthusiastic response which his "Ich Bin Ein Berliner" speech generated.[1] He had, said Neustadt, "a distaste for preaching, for the preachiness of politics,"[2] and, having once raised hysteria about bomb shelters in a talk on Berlin, he had a genuine distrust of mass emotion as a tool in politics.

Kennedy put a premium on timing and effectiveness. He believed he had to wait until the nation (and not just the avant-garde) was ready to deal with an issue before he would pronounce upon it. Apathy and contentment would have to be pierced before the nation would respond to heretofore unrecognized challenges and crises at the President's behest, and public opinion would have to be converted before Kennedy thought it worthwhile to push a reluctant Congress. There was no point in "calling spirits from the vasty deep" if they would not come when called.[3] Early in his term, Kennedy qualified his promise of bold leadership by saying: "I will at such time as I think it most useful and effective . . . use the moral authority of the Presidency. . . . But I want to make sure that whatever I do or say does have some beneficial effect."[4] Kennedy saw no sense in dividing the country or alienating Congress or squandering his limited political capital or feeding the fires of extremism or wearing out his welcome and credibility by making major appeals for public support on too many hopeless or meaningless causes. He was not one to expend himself for lost causes however virtuous. "There is no point in raising hell and then not being successful," he once said. "There is no sense in putting the office of the Presidency on the line on an issue, and then being defeated."[1]

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[1] For this speech in Berlin, see Chapter VI, #5, below. For a disclaimer on Kennedy's distaste for rhetoric, see the end of this section.

[2] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 206.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 661.

[4] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 369.

Although this celebrated remark reflects a general archaic American belief in winning, Novak sees it as being distinctively characteristic of American Catholic civil religion, replete with pessimism about changing the given institutional order. He writes:

> JFK was (it was said) a rhetorical radical, an ideological liberal, a fiscal conservative, and an institutional tory. It is, indeed, a tory conception of institutions to try to inspire persons, knowing that one cannot mold instutations suddenly to one's will. ("Popes come and go, the Curia remains forever"--it is an old Catholic saying). The Kennedy "politics of expectation" was in fact an invitation to expect very little from established institutions, a pledge to work within a time-frame not bounded by "the first one hundred days, nor . . . the first one thousand days, nor . . . our lifetime on this planet," but to begin with a tiny but growing "band of brothers." The creative energies inspired by this quite Irish vision are still unfolding. Legal practice and public health medecine and citizen advocacy have been significantly altered by Kennedy realism. It is a realism different from those America has known before, a moral style quite different from that of our Protestant past. The accounts of its debits and credits are not yet closed.[2]

Schlesinger also gives the cast of Catholic realism to Kennedy's viewpoint, which sees unyielding commitments only for saints, justifies accomodation, and virtually neutralizes courage by the exercise of prudence:

> Kennedy knew that ideals and institutions were stubborn, and that change took place more often by accomodation than by annihilation. His cult of courage was in this sense ethical rather than political; he saw the courage of "unyielding devotion to principle" as a moral fulfillment of the individual rather than necessarily the best way to run a government. Indeed, he took pains to emphasis in Profiles that politicians could also demonstrate courage "through their acceptance of compromise, through their advocacy of conciliation, through their willingness to replace conflict with co-operation." Senators who go down to defeat in vain defense of a single principle "will not be on hand to fight for that or any other principle in the future." One felt here an echo of St. Thomas: "Prudence applies principles to particular issues; consequently, it does not establish moral purpose, but contrives the means thereto."[3]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 651.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 72, 252-253.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 110.

In any case, Kennedy's cult of realistic effectiveness and minimal risk often spelled inertia in his dealing with the institution of the Congress and discouraged active pursuit of genuinely political objectives.

Kennedy also found himself hamstrung by political considerations from getting much done. He had to live with the opposition bureaucrats he had appointed after his narrow victory in order to win the nation's confidence as President of all the people and to dispel his image as a power-hungry young careerist on the make.[1] Desire for consensus thwarted initiative. When challenged about delaying the admission of Red China to the United Nations, Kennedy admitted that Taiwan's representing China made no sense, but warned the more principled Stevenson that he couldn't politically afford to have China admitted until after the next election, ending up with the dictum of vulgar pragmatism, "I am for any strategy that works."[2] Likewise, Kennedy stayed in Vietnam for no good reason lest he be charged with being soft on Communism and lose votes. "His motto might have been: no enemies to the right,"[3] said Joseph Kraft of Kennedy. As President of all the people committed to unifying them all behind himself and his national purpose irrespective of their divergent interests, Kennedy tried to occupy the center, but in the absence of much liberal opposition, the center kept listing to the right. "In the absence of a left," wrote Carey McWilliams, "President Kennedy had only to move a few steps to the right (usually by protecting his foreign policy against right-wing criticism) in order to occupy virtually the whole spectrum."[4] At times, Kennedy was so busy protecting his flank from reactionary criticism that he wondered if he was getting anything done, and he welcomed pressure from the left as giving him more freedom to maneuver.[1] Thus Kennedy's loftier brand of pragmatism and his gathering young problem-solving types to him at the helm of government was defeated not only by the racalcitrance of the non-pragmatic bureaucrats in the ranks of government, as his apologists claim, but also by the vulgar pragmatism and even opportunism which was so overwhelmingly intent on Kennedy's winning re-election that inaction was preferred and minimal action proferred only when political pressure had mounted. Kennedy called for archaic dedication to himself but his own dedication was also to himself, and he risked no more than he had to. So Kennedy sat in the most powerful office in the world--having delivered ringing promises, as Contemperor, to get the country moving again at his tempo--feeling powerless, hamstrung by the people and Congress and the Executive branch, by his disdain for emotion and passion for winning, by his cult of effectiveness and fear of political risk, silent, waiting for the tides to change.

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 664. For the Cold War mentality of many of Kennedy's Republican appointments, see Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 125-127 and Chapter IV, #3, above.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 446.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 245.

[4] Ibid.

The most common criticism of Kennedy during his presidency was that he had failed as a public educator. It was said that he had concentrated on "selling" himself and his family rather than his ideas; that he was excessively pre-occupied with his "image;" that he was unwilling to convert personal popularity into policy pressure for his program.[2] Noting the discrepancy between Kennedy's personal popularity and the support for his policies, observers concluded that he was reluctant to spend his popularity for results. Walter Lippmann commented: "One of his weaknesses as a public leader is that he does not want to be unpopular anywhere--with anyone, and I think a public leader at times . . . has to get into struggles where somebody gets a bloody nose."[1] James Reston concurred: "He is a tactician and not a teacher. He plays touch government. He seems to touch everything and tackle nothing."[2] Other critics compared Kennedy to a matinee idol. One Republican Congressman dismissed the enthusiasm with which Kennedy was viewed, saying, "It's like a movie actor--it's not related to legislation."[3] Noting the pretensious discrepancy between Kennedy's rhetoric and his accomplishments, Norman Podhoretz concluded that "there was no real driving force or serious energy, political energy, behind those stated aims that many of us found attractive."[4] Even Kennedy's use of the media was faulted for its lack of controversial political substance. Carroll Kilpatrick charged the President with neglecting to use his opportunities "to use the forum of the Presidency as an educational institution," and Howard K. Smith, who later dubbed Kennedy a "brilliant communicator," faulted Kennedy in October 1963 for not being the great teacher and explainer that every great President has been.[5]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 551, 680. Cf. Norman Podhoretz in Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 116.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 655.

Some questioned not only Kennedy's reticence to speak out but whether he had anything to say. They saw him as pragmatic or prudential in the worst sense, bracketing morality from any effective influence and indulging in pragmatism "of the grubbiest kind."[6] Alfred Kaz announced that New York intellectuals considered Kennedy "slick, cool, and empty, devoid of vision, an expert and calculating pragmatist."[7] Other intellectuals spoke of Kennedy as lacking conviction, enervated, and rudderless and called him ruthless and indecisive.[1] Kennedy could not answer James Reston's question of what he wished to accomplish by the time his term was over nor did he respond to Reston's suggestion of the need for some goal to guide his day-to-day decisions and priorities. "It was only when I turned to the question of immediate, tangible problems," said Reston, "that he seized the point and rolled off a torrent of statistics."[2] Reston also found it odd for a writer of a book celebrating heroes to say "why fight if you are not sure to win?"[3] Kennedy's initial minimization of risk in the civil rights arena was phenomenal. Although Martin Luther King later praised Kennedy for his "ability to respond to creative pressure," he and other civil rights leaders rued Kennedy's lack of decisive leadership in the civil rights struggle. Far from being the "Great Initiator" that Neustadt calls him, Kennedy seemed to lack any grand purpose that would motivate him to move any faster than events forced him or to "squander" any of his political capital, especially at first. So why not squander a little? asked Cater. Why not, indeed?

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[1] Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 68. [2] Ibid.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 66.

[4] Norman Podhoretz cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 116.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 655, 666.

[6] Richard H. Rovere, "Letter from Washington," in John F. Kennedy and the New Frontier, p. 248.

[7] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 682.

In the domestic arena, where Kennedy's interest was less and the people's interests more diverse, Kennedy was most modernistically free of commitments. He did not act in the civil rights area, where races diverged, with any decisiveness until pressure dictated,[4] and in the economic area, where parties and classes diverged, he was never forced to take a decisive position. Kennedy refused to be bound by the "outdated categories of the Thirties," such as liberal and conservative. He sought to dissolve "myths," to lead the nation beyond the obsessive issues of the past, and to call forth new perceptions required for the contemporary world in a "politics of modernity." In a campaign speech, he said:

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[1] Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 99; White, Making President 1964, p. 43.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 623. "Kennedy was possessed," explains Schlesinger, "not by a blueprint, but by a process," i.e., he was concerned only for the process of decision-making, not for the goals sought.

[3] Reston, "What Was Killed Was the Promise," p. 228.

[4] See Chapter VI, #6, below.

> The great trouble with American politics today . . . is that we talk in slogans too often and symbols and we fight old battles. The sixties are going to be entirely different. . . . We are a new generation. Science and technology and the change in world forces are going to require us to face entirely new problems which will require new solutions.[1]

In the economic sphere, Kennedy put out that ideological considerations were irrelevant, that goals were not at issue but only means, and that everything would turn out right if we left things to the experts. In his commencement address at Yale University in May 1962, Kennedy said:

> The central issues of our time relate not to basic clashes of philosophy or ideology but to ways and means of reaching common goals. What is at stake is not some grand warfare of rival ideologies which will sweep the country with passion but the practical management of a modern economy. What we need is not labels and cliches but more basic discussion of sophisticated and technical issues involved in keeping a great economic machinery moving ahead.[2]

In contrast to the Eisenhower Administration, which had been deeply convinced of the superiority, not to say sanctity, of the system of free enterprise, Kennedy refused to take sides. Schlesinger writes:

> Declining to regard the choice between private and public means as a matter of moral principle, he rejected the theologians of the private sector and the theologians of the public sector--those on the right who regarded public enterprise as inherently sinful and those on the left who regarded private enterprise as inherently sinful. In his judgment, the only issue was which means could best achieve the desired end, and this was not to be answered by doctrine but by experiment.[3]

Citing the need to move on from the reassuring repetition of stale phrases to a new confrontation with reality, Kennedy attacked the "myths" that deficits caused inflation and that the national debt was growing at a dangerously rapid rate.[1]

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[1] Schlesinger, Crisis of Confidence, p. 60 and A Thousand Days, pp. 667-678, 71. Rather than being original, however, Schlesinger saw Kennedy's domestic program as New Deal left-overs imbued with Kennedy's contemporaneity.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 593.

[3] Ibid., pp. 561-562.

The Yale speech did little to dispel mythology. The business community as a whole regarded the speech as blasphemy against the verities. In time, Wall Street came to accept deficits as a benign invention, but Main Street still evidently regarded them as the work of the devil. The Gallup poll reported 72 per cent opposed to any tax reduction which would even temporarily raise the national debt.[2] The mythology about the sinfulness of federal spending and the wickedness of the growing federal debt had deep roots in the folkways. Heller attributed it to the basic Puritan ethic of the American people though it was a peculiar puritanism that allowed individuals to indulge freely in all the vices--to unbalance budgets, to go into debt, to spend more than they earned--that they would righteously deny their government.[3] Apparently, most Americans were, again, not ready to follow their Contemporer into the waters of a new economics with none of their old principles intact, and Kennedy, rather than helping them sort the best from the worst in their myths, tried merely to brush the myths aside--together with the convictions they symbolized--ended up "way ahead" of them, and eventually abandoned any real attempt to get a tax cut passed. Seeing Kennedy as seeking to tinker with the economy with an overreliance on expertise and no commitment to values, Theodore Roszak, in the name of the impassioned youth of the counterculture, denounced him as a technocrat.[4]

Kennedy's lack of decisive leadership, illustrated in his approach to the economy, could be multiplied several times over in other domestic programs, e.g. civil rights, aid to education. Kennedy's modernistic lack of goals gave him no reason to move boldly and his archaic fear of losing gave him reason not to move. Kennedy was energized in foreign policy by an archaic nationalism which led to impassioned speeches calling for preparedness, and sacrifice, and defense of freedom--of which the fallout shelter press conference and the "Ich Bin Ein Berliner" speech were merely the most extreme--but he had no passion for the bureaucratic and legislative processes by which domestic policy might come into being; his apologists' claims about his inspiring accomplishments on the domestic front sound as hollow as their denials of his belief in stirring rhetoric in the foreign field.[1] The harsh fact of the matter is that Kennedy's domestic program was "all but an absolute failure," for he relied on a "method of politics that expected to succeed without the use of politics: to accomplish what it wished to do without the assistance of political institutions; to determine what it should do without the guidance of political values; to sustain its effort in what it attempted without the co-operation of political interests."[2] Kennedy substituted popular for political leadership:

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[1] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 593. [2] *Ibid*., p. 597. [3] *Ibid*.,.p. 925.

[2] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1969), pp. 11-12.

> He relied so much on the direct connection between the President and the people--his regular use of the televised press conference is an obvious example--that he neglected the actual processes by which his purposes could be achieved, while arousing the expectation that they would be achieved merely by a dramatic expression of the popular will. Whenever there was something which he wished to do, he went befor the television cameras and could rely on obtaining the desired public reaction; the expectation was aroused, and the expectation was supported; but on the following morning the thing had still to be done.[3]

But it wasn't done. Novak tells us that Boston Catholic realism taught the Kennedys that "politics is not a place to score moral points but to win and that after one has won, moral deeds are the way to greatness,"[1] but it seems that Kennedy never learned the second half of the lesson, for he was always pre-occupied with winning even after he had won the highest office in the land. It may be Catholic realism to view the given order of the world, which both bears the structure of divine creation and is weighted down by original sin, as basically unchanging, but it is not Catholic realism to disdain to work through institutions or to proclaim new eras with boundless possibilities. It may also be Catholic realism to apply principles to particular situations with great prudence rather than staking all on a single cause, but it is not Catholic to have no principles to apply, to conduct politics without political values, to sanction anything that works, or to exalt prudence and temperance at the expense of justice and courage.

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[1] Fairlie flatly denies that Kennedy's speeches are anti-histrionic; However laconic Kennedy may have been in private, his public speeches were lofty, grandiloquent, designed to exalt; Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 5, 64, 85-86, 215. For Fairlie's Byzantine analogy, see Chapter VI, epigraph.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 342-343. [3] Ibid., p. 150.

It appears that Kennedy had neither ethical nor political courage but only an archaic tough, athletic fortitude, which endured hardship and pain and reacted, almost rashly, to challenge but was at quite a loss to put itself out in ordinary mundane political situations when he was not under the gun. Winning was not part of Kennedy's game; it was the whole of it. There were all sorts of good things that he was going to do during his second term (such as forgetting about right-wing criticism and getting out of Vietnam, according to O'Donnell), but he was good at campaigning, that was where he succeeded, that was where his style of personal leadership counted. So Kennedy never stopped campaigning during his first term; he even died campaigning.

Kennedy's domestic style was compounded of a modernism which envisioned vast possibilities and boasted the means to realize them but lacked the means for choosing among them or for getting others with power to join him in choosing those objectives and to form coalitions to enact them; half an historic realism which contradicted the modernism without inculcating persistent value commitments; an archaism nurtured by campaigning which placed great value on winning and feared the loss of votes which taking stands on controversial political issues might entail. The result, for this energetic Great Initiator, was inertia.

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 72.

IV

As the Enlightened Pragmatist in foreign policy, Kennedy modernistically sought to dispense with ideology, to avoid self-righteousness andd total solutions, and to move away from an archaic Cold War mentality. Roger Hilsman succinctly captures Kennedy's viewpoint at its best:

> He had a capacity to see complications in a world whose inconsistencies surpassed comprehension yet he had strong convictions on where we ought to be trying to move it all. He had a patience and a pragmatic willingness to settle for the possible, to see the other side of questions and to provide opponents a way out. Yet he wanted to change the world and was eager to get on with the change. . . . His greatest, almost magical, quality was the ability to inspire men to help bring about this change, to "get America moving again"--the capacity to expose where we had fallen short as a nation and to excite us to do our best. . . . And yet, somehow, Kennedy was able to do this without sentimentality, to do it with both style and taste, and without letting either the excitement or the idealism cloy. Often there was wit . . . and always there was a skeptical questioning and a cool, unruffled pragmatism that included not only patience but a willingness to compromise, to make a world of diversity with room for all.[1]

But Schlesinger is the chief proponent of Kennedy's pragmatism, developing a much more sophisticated philosophic position than Kennedy would have been able to handle and identifying with Kennedy many of his own views, which with Kennedy's approval, he worked into Kennedy's speeches. We will give Schlesinger his day in court, with some analysis, especially of his more philosophic opinions, but largely without interruption. At the same time, we will want to bear in mind and clarify in rebuttal afterwards that this kind of pragmatism was only a part of Kennedy's mind, filtered through Schlesinger, and not the whole of it, that there were other impulses in contradiction to it at work within Kennedy's own mind and emanating from his associates, and that this pragmatic mentality was hardly paramount in Kennedy's characteristic way of acting, especially in a crisis, which was the situation in which he most loved to act.[1] Still, Kennedy's modernistic pragmatism as Schlesinger presents it is a formidable position and deserves a hearing.

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[1] Roger Hilsman, To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1967), pp. 48-49.

Philosophically, Schlesinger ties Kennedy's pragmatic perspective with the pragmatic rather than the utopian strain of progressivism, with Locke rather than the philosophes, with a politics of ideas rather than Calvinist ideology, with William James' tough-minded pragmatism rather than with tender-minded rationalism. Let me quote him at length and then respond.

> From the start of the republic American progressivism had had two strains, related but distinct. The pragmatic strain accepted, without wholly approving, the given structure of society and aimed to change it by action from within. The utopian strain rejected the given structure of society root and branch, and aimed to change it by exhortation and example from without. The one sprang from the philosophy of Locke and Hume; its earliest exemplars were Franklin and Jefferson. The other sprang from the religion of the millenarians; its early exemplars were George Fox and, in a secularized version, Robert Owen. The one regarded history as a continuity. in which mankind progressed from the intolerable to the faintly bearable. The other regarded history as an alternation of catastrophe and salvation, in which a new turn of the road must somehow bring humanity to a new heaven and a new earth. The one was practical and valued results. The other was prophetic and valued revelations. The one believed in piecemeal improvements, the other in total solutions. Both were impatient with established complacencies and pieties. Both recognized that the great constant of history was change. But the problem of power split them. The pragmatists accepted the responsibility of power--and thereby risked corruption. The utopians refused complicity with power--and thereby risked irrelevance.[2]

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[1] For Kennedy's style in crises, see Chapter VI, introduction.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 680.

The Americans were above all sons of Locke. They believed in natural rights, individual liberty, popular sovereignty and private property. They set it all down in the Declaration of Independence, and their peculiar circumstances--the absence of a feudal past and thus of a revolutionary present--assured unanimity on the Lockean principles. . . . The transatlantic passage, reinforcing the empirical elements in the Lockean tradition, sharpened the contrast with the rationalism of the *philosophes*. It may be useful here to introduce a distinction between *ideas* and *ideologies*. Ideas are particular insights; ideologies are ideas crystalized into universal systems. Ideas are relative, ideologies absolute. In part the difference between the man of ideas and the ideologist is a matter of temperament. Where some men accept the confusion of experience, others require the notion of ultimate rationality in the universe; these yearn for a single, fundamental, all-encompassing, all-explanatory pattern which man can apprehend and which equips him with a body of principles adequate to all the contingencies of politics and life.[1]

Americans have not been consistently immune to the ideological temptation. The intellectual origins of the nation were saturated with one of the noblest and most formidable ideological disciplines ever devised, Calvinist theology, and any nation so conditioned was bound to have a certain vulnerability to ideology ever after. Throughout America history men have attempted to endow America with a creed, to translate Americanism into a binding set of propositions, and to construct a national tradition in terms of one or another ultimate, ranging from the Natural Law to the Class Struggle. . . . But the American system was not friendly to systematic and rigid principles. If continental Europe has tended to a politics of ideology, the United States has tended toward a politics of ideas.[2]

The greatest of American philosophers, William James, set forth the American view on this point when he drew his celebrated distinction between "tender-minded" and "tough-minded." The mark of the tender-minded man, as James saw it, was his conviction of the essential unity and harmony of all things. He was a monist, who believed that the universe could be understood from a single point of view and that there was some ultimate structure which will draw together and reconcile all the conflicting meanings and values of experience. . . . Such people display a "temper of intellectual absolutism, a demand that the world shall be a solid block, subject to one control."

"The actual universe," James thought, "is a thing wide open, but rationalism makes systems, and the system must be closed." Against the tender-minded assumption of monism, James urged the tough-minded claims of pluralism. For the pragmatist, "the crudity of experience remains an eternal element thereof. There is no possible point of view from which the world can appear an absolute single fact." The pragmatist "turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, toward facts, toward action, and toward power."[3]

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[1] Schlesinger, *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 47-48.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 49. [3] *Ibid.*

> Kennedy was not a rationalist. I don't think he had a classical faith in the serenity or order or rationality of society. He was a man of reason in the sense in which William James was a man of reason. . . . The tender-minded were monists who saw the universe as an ultimate harmony in which all the parts were related to all the other parts. But the tough-minded in James' sense were those who saw the universe not as one but as many, who believed there was an intractability about it, who believed there were genuine issues which could not be reconciled and harmonized, who thought there was basic discord in the universe. Kennedy was very much on the tough-minded pattern; he was, in James' terms, a radical empiricist. So that, while he was a man of reason in the way that he reached conclusions about public policy, he did not, I think, presuppose that order was the basic framework of existence.[1]

Kennedy easily falls on the "right" side of the first distinction. The utopian progressives were identified with the sectarians, whose negative civil religion damned the state as the devil's empire and urged rejection of any relations with the existing state other than a mimimal modus vivendi. But Schlesinger neglects to point out the way in which the compromise of a strict sectarian position by Quakers and other sects as they fused with Calvinists into "Ascetic Protestantism" contributed an impetus for changing the actual world within puritan civil religion,[2] so that we see Kennedy's distance from pure sectarian religion without noting his distance from the far more world-transforming puritan civil religion (which Schlesinger calls "Calvinist theology" as an ideology), to which sectarian religion also contributed.[3] While the utopian strain of progressivism is defined too narrowly and thereby consigned to irrelevancy, the pragmatic strain is defined too broadly to be useful. Schlesinger includes Benjamin Franklin, whom Weber uses as a model of the Protestant ethic, the republican Jefferson, the multi-faceted Locke, and the skeptical Hume; it makes a great deal of difference with which of these figures one identifies Kennedy as a pragmatist. The identification with Locke over against the philosophes is especially problematic because Locke is, in part, a precursor of the philosophes and because Locke, as the father of most latter-day Western political theory, has fathered two rather different (though interrelated) offspring: historic republican civil religion and modern civil religion. The differences between the two are, again, significant. The republican form of historic civil religion has an affinity with the philosophes as well as Locke, is the major strain in the Declaration of Independence, believes in fundamental principles such as God-given rights and liberties, and is kept alive by the civil liberties tradition of American liberalism from which Kennedy was "detached." Modern civil religion draws on another side of Locke and on the Utilitarians and believes in no higher good than the "pursuit of happiness" through the conflict and adjudication of self-interests and national interests (originally portrayed as under the auspices of an "invisible hand"); it is close to this side of liberalism, concerned not with ideas but with interests and with Realpolitik in a moral vacuum, that Kennedy's pragmatism should be placed.[1] The identification with James' tough-minded pluralism seems fair enough at first blush though James came out of a milieu in which common assumptions of value--"a submerged and absolute liberal faith," as Hartz calls it[2]--underlay both the tender-minded and tough-minded options. Moreover, James was a proponent of passionate action based on conviction in an open world and would never have countenanced the bracketing off of moral considerations in an unprincipled operationalism, which was the other side of Kennedy's pragmatism, the vulgar pragmatism which relied on a technical reason far more truncated than James' pragmatic reason.[1] Schlesinger is surely correct in pointing out Kennedy's distance from historic systems of fixed principles, which he defines narrowly, but Kennedy's distance from the American mainstream is obscured by Schlesinger's defining it so broadly that the extreme character of Kennedy's modernism is not evident. If Kennedy was free--and I would question this at an archaic level--of a politics of ideology, it is also clear that he was free from a politics of ideas in any but a most haphazard sense.

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[1] Arthur Schlesinger cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 118.

[2] Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, Social Teachings, II, 802-820. According to Troeltsch, it was precisely this combination of the radicalism of the sects and the worldly responsibility of the Calvinist churches which made Ascetic Protestantism so new and potent. Schlesinger's bifurcation misses it totally.

[3] Unlike Catholicism, from which Kennedy was "detached," the puritan form of religion was absent from Kennedy's family background. Some lauded its absence. Penn Kimball saw a freshness in Kennedy's abandonment of the Puritan ethic in favor of a pragmatism which understood the utility of power without moralizing about it; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 34. I wonder.

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[1] Cf. Robert Bellah, The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), xii-xiv, 13-32. The conflict between historic "virtue," supported by puritans and republicans, and modern utilitarian "interest" as the basis for American polity is central for Bellah.

[2] Louis Hartz cited by Schlesinger, Crisis of Confidence, p. 49.

As part of his modernism, Schlesinger saw Kennedy abjuring self-righteousness and total solutions in favor of proximate solutions within a complicated world mixing good and evil, where human commonality was more basic than national differences. Kennedy saw both sides of most questions. He remarked that he was not sure he was cut out to be a politician since he saw the strength of opposing arguments too well; it would be easier if he had divine certitude that he was right, but he found no cure-alls, no perfect solutions, no single or certain answer--if he found any answer at all.[2] Kennedy did not line up good guys and bad guys. He liked to quote Lincoln:

> There are few things wholly good or wholly evil. Almost everything, especially of Government policy, is an inseparable compound of the two, so that our best judgment of the preponderance between them is continually demanded.[3]

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[1] See Chapter IV, #3. In Bellah's terms derived from Tillich, James' pragmatic reason was less "unhinged" from a moral context, more rooted in a comprehensive transcendent or "ecstatic" reason than Kennedy's reliance on autonomous technical expertise; Bellah, Broken Covenant, pp. 152-153.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 100, 89; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 675 and Kennedy Legacy, p. 137. Firm, undogmatic positions are overlooked.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 109.

XUM

Kennedy did not identify virtue with our side, seeking to purge self-righteousness from Voice of America programming, nor did he deny it to our opponents. "No government or social system is so evil that its people must be considered as lacking in virtue," Kennedy said in a commencement address at American University.[1] He refused to regard global competition with the Communists as a holy war. He was an American, holding that a free democracy was the best form of government, and he was ready to go to war if necessary to save democracy from extinction. But he saw not a final battle between democractic good and communist evil but an obscure and intricate drama, where men, institutions, and ideals, all bedeviled by the sin of self-righteousness, threatened to rush humanity to the edge of destruction, and where salvation lay in man's liberation from myth, stereotype, and fanaticism.[2]

Kennedy saw the world in terms more complex than total victory or total defeat. Just as historic conflicts infrequently pitted total good against total evil, so they rarely concluded in total victory or total defeat, he observed. In 1958, Kennedy renounced the proposition that "we should enter every military conflict as a moral crusade requiring the unconditional surrender of the enemy."[3] Yet an age of insoluble problems bred extremism, hysteria, and a weakness for simple and passionate solutions. When Kennedy would say "we simply must reconcile ourselves to the fact that a total solution is impossible in a nuclear age," he was affronting all those on both left and right who had faith in total solutions. The politics of modernity was intolerable for true believers.[4]

Schlesinger saw Kennedy as moving away from Cold War ideology.

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 488, 563, 823.

[2] Ibid., pp. 812, 279.   [3] Ibid., pp. 478, 110, 279.

[4] Ibid., pp. 690, 679.

Although Kennedy had begun with highly orthodox views of America's role in the world (as the defender of freedom, righteousness, and order on an archaic model), he became increasingly flexible in his view of the world during his years of service on Capitol Hill and during his presidency itself.[1] Schlesinger sees Kennedy's new view freeing up our foreign policy:

> Kennedy's third world policy represented a considerable reconstruction of our total foreign policy and a considerable break from the Washington worldview of the Fifties. In the Eisenhower years the conduct of foreign affairs had rested on a set of abstract and arbitrary doctrines--about the uncommitted world which we regarded as immoral; about the "free world," or, as it was known in public documents, the Free World, which we hoped would conform to the principles upon which we fancied American society was based; and about the communist world, which we saw as a centralized conspiracy. Now each of these dogmas was undergoing revision.[2]

Neustadt also commends Kennedy's finer understanding of international relations and greater flexibility:

> Kennedy left widened options in foreign relations: a military posture far more flexible and usuable than the one he inherited, a diplomatic posture more sophisticated in its whole approach to neutralists and Leftists, markedly more mindful of distinctions in the world, even among allies. . . . He had a feeling for the fine distinctions among his fellow kings, realizing that in another country an *effective* politician could have motives very different from his own.[3]

Kennedy sought to remove ideological blinders and to see the world more in terms of national ambitions, to take off the shackles of anti-communist sloganeering, to de-emotionalize the Cold War, to move beyond--though hardly far beyond--Cold War cliches in his Inaugural Address.[4] The John Foster Dulles contrast between the God-appointed apostles of free enterprise and the regimented hordes of atheistic communism bored him. Kennedy did not cotton to such moral absolutism, and he appointed a Secretary of State for himself who did not pretend to speak for God. He did not believe the threat of communism was indivisible nor did the obligation to to oppose that threat was unlimited though he inherited the policy outcomes of such a moralistic mood in such places as Laos and Vietnam.[1] Kennedy dropped the empty and unrealistic threats to roll back the Iron Curtain or to unleash Chiang Kai-shek, which had shrouded our real policy intentions for allies and adversaries alike and obscured our own perceptions of major changes in the world, such as the Sino-Soviet split and the growing rift between rich and poor nations throughout the world.[2]

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[1] Sorensen, *Kennedy Legacy*, p. 137.

[2] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 561.

[3] Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, pp. 209, 203.

[4] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 279, 692, 155.

With fresh vision, Kennedy saw the split-up of real and constructed blocs into a world of diversity as the wave of the future and a good thing. In his Inaugural Address, Kennedy said that he did not expect the new always to support U. S. views but hoped to find them strongly supporting their own freedom. In his American University speech, he expressed a hope to make the world "safe for diversity."[3] Not regarding neutralism as a sin or independence as defection and heresy, Kennedy believed smaller nations should be free to seek their own salvation without upsetting the balance between the super-powers. He did not regard anti-colonialism, nationalism, or non-alignment as theologically reprehensible defections from the Free World nor did he magnify the pinpricks of anti-American bravado out of proportion.[4]

Others in his Administration backed this view. Robert Kennedy said, "We do not condemn others for their differences in economic and political structures,"[5] and he conceded that strong governments may be

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 279, 402, 495. This hardly squares with Kennedy's inaugural boast to defend freedom anywhere; it is possible that he grew beyond that earlier position (see Chapter VI, #4).

[2] Ibid., p. 565.

[3] For the passage in which this idea appears, see #5, below.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 566, 470. [5] Ibid., p. 562.

XUM

necessary in new nations. Dean Rusk re-iterated the diversity theme:

> We seek, above all, a world of free choice in which a great diversity of nations, each faithful to its own traditions and its own genius, will learn to respect the ground rules of human survival. We do not wish to make the world over in our own image—and we will not accept that the world be made over in the image of any society or dogmatic creed. Against the world of coercion, we affirm the world of choice.[1]

Likewise, Kennedy believed our national interest would be "best served by preserving and protecting a world of diversity in which no power or combination of powers can threaten the security of the United States."[2]

Kennedy regarded the spread of neutralism as inevitable and nationalism as stronger than communism in the new states. At Berkeley, he said:

> The long view shows us that the revolution of national independence is a fundamental fact of our era. No one who examines the modern world can doubt that the great currents of history are carrying the world away from the monolithic toward the pluralistic idea—away from communism and toward national independence and freedom. . . . No one can doubt that the wave of the future is not the conquest of the world by a single dogmatic creed but the liberation of the diverse enrgies of free nations and free men.[3]

With his pragmatist's preference for the partial truth and partial righteousness of pluralism rather than the consolidation of the world into true believers and heretics, Kennedy recast peaceful co-existence into a struggle in which we would "win," not by getting everyone on our side, but through the inevitable diversification of the world, magnified at times into something like an iron law of history. At various times, he said:

> The tide of history has begun to flow in the direction of freedom. . . . The one great irreversible trend in the history of the world is on the side of liberty. . . . If freedom and Communism were to compete for men's minds in a world at peace, I would look to the future with ever increasing confidence.[4]

Believing this, Kennedy sought not to "win" the Cold War, but to dampen it down, to prevent it from monopolizing our energies, to outlast it, to permit the long-run forces of liberty and truth to work their way naturally and peacefully, so that, without a nuclear war, what Thomas Jefferson called the "disease of liberty" might be caught in communist-held areas.[1] Kennedy came close to articulating a doctrine of Providence and of man in expressing his belief in the ultimate triumph of liberty:

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 564.

[2] Ibid., p. 894.

[3] Ibid., pp. 468, 515, 567-569.

[4] Ibid., pp. 894, 690, 284.

> The "magic power" on our side is the desire of every person to be free, of every nation to be independent. . . . It is because I believe our system is more in keeping with the fundamentals of human nature that I believe we are ultimately going to be successful.[2]

Schlesinger did not want for critics of his presentation of Kennedy as a pragmatic modernist in foreign affairs. Fairlie bluntly contradicts him when he asserts, "For all its quickness and its curiosity, the mind of John Kennedy does not appear to have been equipped to deal with complexity. The ideology of the Cold War was simplifying."[3] And that ideology continued to thrive in the Kennedy Administration. With nary a nod toward the interests of the Russian Empire, Robert McNamara spoke in September 1961 of the "drive of Soviet Communist imperialism to colonize the world,"[4] and, as we noted, it was he who set U. S. military policy and whose sharp views Kennedy preferred to the more measured views of the State Department.[5] Identification of revolutionary movements with a monolithic world Communist conspiracy underlay our response to "wars of liberation" in Laos and Vietnam—despite their anti-colonial and nationalist components which a less ideological approach would have accentuated—and it informed Kennedy's side of his abortive parlay with Khrushchev in Vienna.[6] Consistently overrating the unifying influence of ideology and underestimating the calculation of divergent interests beneath ideological disguises--which is the heart of a truly modernistic Realpolitik--the Kennedy administration was slow to grasp the significance of the Sino-Soviet split.[1] Although Kennedy may have toned down Cold War rhetoric, he actually revived the Cold War which had almost died, in practice, under an unusable nuclear umbrella in the Eisenhower years. Pursuing the "McNamara Strategy," Kennedy built up American conventional and anti-guerrilla forces, which Eisenhower had ruled out, and pursued with vigor the Eisenhower Doctrine that the United States would "assist any nation or group of nations . . . in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence," a doctrine which Eisenhower had pursued only half-heartedly and which was itself an extension of the more limited and realistic policy of "containment" of Russian or Chinese forces invading countries surrounding them.[2]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 578-579.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 469.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 137. [4] Ibid., p. 296.

[5] See Chapter IV, #3, above.

[6] George Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," Commentary, June, 1966, p. 56.

If, as Cater says, "Kennedy had no grand design in foreign policy except to help free states maintain their independence,"[3] this was grand design enough, for it led in Walt W. Rostow, whom Fairlie calls the "ecclesiast and missionary and soldier . . . joined in the Ignatius Loyola of the administration," to a formidable ideology. Without modernistically restricting itself to areas where our national interest was at stake, this ideology committed us to stabilizing whole regions, to making the boundless endeavor of promoting "the evolution of stable, effective, and democratic societies" through pre-determined stages of development "a highest priority task," and to counteracting the "disease of guerrilla warfare" wherever it popped up through "programs of village development, communications, and indoctrination" as well as a "proper military program of deterrence."[1] It was this unrealistic and indefensible posture that John Kennedy brought to Vienna, assuming that he was responsible for maintaining the status quo and that Khrushchev was responsible for any change in it and then feeling that Khrushchev was bullying him when he refused to share Kennedy's assumptions.[2] In relying on Rostow, Kennedy was hardly free of ideology. Fairlie notes:

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 297. Hilsman declared, "Communist ideology, with its goals of world revolution, still provides an overall basis for unity between Peiping and Moscow" in a November 1962 speech.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 124; Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 55.

[3] Cater, "Do-It-Yourself Presidential Power," p. 217.

> In the mind of Walt Rostow . . . the ideology of the Cold War was translated into an all-embracing doctrine such as would have been sufficient, in an earlier age, to sustain the church militant. It is not easy to exaggerate his influence, witting and unwitting. With intelligence and industry and zeal in equal parts, he took the ideology of the Cold War, which had been appropriate to a brief period, and converted it into a motive for a crusade of limitless extent and of endless duration. By his thesis, he supplied the rationale by which the Cold War, just as it was ending, was transformed from a national exigency into a a national purpose; he gave to the Total Cold War a sense, not only of mission, but of inevitability.[3]

Seeing his own iron law of economic growth as an alternative to Marx's (just as Kennedy's "voluntary totalitarianism" was an alternative to full totalitarianism), Rostow put forth American "aid" to "developing" nations as a fulfillment of America's mission which would save her from wallowing in mere private domestic happiness:

> American society has a meaning and a purpose which transcends the nation. . . . If over the coming decades the United States should turn its back on the great revolutionary transformations going forward in the underdeveloped countries, devoting itself almost exclusively to domestic chores and objectives, American society will progressively lose some of those basic spiritual qualities which have been historically linked to the nation's sense of world mission. . . . We need the challenge of world development to keep us from the stagnation of smug prosperity . . . to give fresh meaning and vitality to the historic American sense of mission—a mission to see the principles of national independence and human liberty extended on the world scene.[4]

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 129-134.

[2] Cf. Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 56.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 127-128.

[4] Ibid., pp. 143-144.

This rhetoric is reminiscent of Kennedy's own campaign and inaugural appeals to abjure private gain for public good, to engage in the hardy adventure of a boundless new frontier, to defend freedom in any place at any cost with a complete devotion which would light our country and the whole world; it is the language of an archaic "manifest destiny" extended beyond the continent to the globe. It is also the language of empire,[1] but it could not be understood as the language of empire, for Americans, in their perpetual innocence and self-righteousness, have to believe that what they are doing to others is for their own good. We "must not act as an arrogant, powerful nation;" we try to spread "liberation,"[2] or, as Kennedy put it in Jefferson's imagery, to enable others to catch the disease of liberty--even if we must, in faithfulness to our own revolutionary heritage, stamp out the rival disease of guerrilla warfare (through which others may be expressing their own native revolutionary impulses) by sending armies and Peace Corps ingenues and pacification teams abroad. While straight modernism would strip our imperialism bare of ideological covering and justify it in limited form as simply the pursuit of our national interest, we preferred--and Kennedy at our helm--to keep our empire-building vested with more universalistic pretensions to virtue; empire could never qualify as an end by itself. Novak comments:

> The national self-understanding remains ambivalent about the mission of the United States in the world. Isolation and empire have both been national passions. The nation should stay disentangled; and it should be an example to other nations; and it should fulfill its responsibilities to freedom around the world; and it should help to liberate the poor and the oppressed. Kennedy summed up all four motifs in his own person. He felt the pressure of all four. Had he lived, he would have been forced, as we now are, to choose among them.[3]

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 264.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 79.

[3] Ibid., pp. 115-116.

But the one thing Kennedy could not do is choose because political choice requires political values and he had none. His modernism had indeed, as Schlesinger claimed, slain any attachment to historic ideology which might have guided him, but insofar as it enabled him to be aware of complexity its influence was stymieing.[1] Nevertheless, Kennedy was, by temperament, unable to be so complete a modernist as to be content merely to coolly calibrate and administratively pursue our country's composite national interests. His archaic ideology of America as catalytic agent for world development in freedom, which he derived from and shared with Rostow, provided the sense of mission he needed, but it was so unbounded that it gave no guidance in setting priorities (adopting the abstract evolution of societies as a "highest priority task" sets no priorities at all). In the vaccuum between his modernism and his archaism, Kennedy lived in the contradiction between his lack of purpose and his sense of mission, being stymied by the one and energized by the other, stymied in terms of definite long-range strategy and energized in the throes of actual crisis situations, leaving him unable to shape events but ready to react to them. Fairlie observes, "The pragmatic realist, acting within a "consensus" that he seeks both to foster and to manipulate, frees himself from political values, only to find himself bound to react pragmatically to events as they occur, able to judge only their urgency, and not their importance."[2] George Ball adds:

> There has been a recent tendency to scoff at the utility of conceptual thinking in foreign policy in favor of a pragmatism that masquerades as a commendable hospitality to fresh ideas. Without doubt, rigidity as such can be a serious fault. But a foreign policy conducted without some well-developed conceptions as to desirable structures of power is not a foreign policy at all but simply a series of unrelated improvisations.[3]

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[1] The danger of immobilization inherent in Christian realism's awareness of "ambiguity" increases in a modern realism which sees a mixture of good and evil in everything but lacks historic means to select relative good.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 256.

[3] Ibid., p. 257.

With some passion, Ball then goes on to attack Schlesinger's bifurcations, expressing dismay that many of his academic friends "have been so seduced by the challenges of operational problems as to renounce any attempt at conceptual thinking as "theological," and, in aid of their own abstractions, have erected a specious dichotomy between "theologians" and "pragmatists."[1] Apparently, a little historic "theology" is a good thing, even for a "pragmatist, enabling him not only to see the mixture of good and evil in the world and to abjure self-righteousness, as the modernist can also do, but also to determine in which course of action a predominance of limited good lies and to pursue it. Otherwise, we have, as we had with Kennedy, the energy of the puritan vision without the vision itself--American positivism attempting to fulfill the prophecy of American puritanism[2]--improvizing its way through a complex world with muted zeal until a crisis comes (or can be conjured up) when all the complexities can be thrown to the winds and pure zeal can flow forth for archaic ends, still unqualified by historic values. In contrast to the noble portrait which Schlesinger gives us--which may have merits of its own--this is the position in which Kennedy, as Enlightened Pragmatist, all too often ended up.

V

As Man of Confidence, Kennedy inspired people to believe in the new era he promised to bring in. Lessard remarks:

> Kennedy's positive qualities, combined with the straightforward appetite to achieve real change, cleared the stuffy air of the fifties in which foreign policy was a stiff--though gripping--pantomime played about the trigger of apocalypse, while the economy slipped and social problems festered unacknowledged. His positive and open approach made people believe that perhaps something could be done--that nuclear war and social injustice weren't inevitable and that the human race was not helpless before its destiny.[3]

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 257. [2] Ibid., pp. 361-362.

[3] Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead?" p. 10.

For Harvey Cox, Kennedy epitomized the New Man, the "pragmatic, technopolitan man," come of age in the epoch of the secular city, who takes his destiny into his own hands, takes responsibility for history, is master of his fate. Cox credits Kennedy with a faith in human ability, not a dogmatic faith but a pragmatic confidence, which presupposes enough order in the world (without making complete order a dubious theistic or rationalistic "ontological" creed) to make proximate and piecemeal solutions to problems tenable without ever facing the outer limits which condition man's actions.[1] As we have noted, Kennedy, who loved "Invictus," had spoken in his Inaugural Address of man's holding "in his mortal hands" the power to abolish poverty or to exterminate life; with some realism he summoned us to a long twilight struggle against poverty and its allies and called for limited arms control (rather than unlimited disarmament) in order to "bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations." The absolute side of this statement reached its peak in a passage in Kennedy's commencement address at American University, which sounds like the credo of modernistic humanism:

> Let us examine our attitude toward peace itself. Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it is unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable--that mankind is doomed--that we are gripped by forces we cannot control. We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made--therefore they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable--and we believe they can do it again.[2]

But this note of supreme confidence is only one motif in Kennedy's repertoire, and it is continually qualified and even contradicted by him. In a subsequent speech at the University of Maine, Kennedy has already

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[1] Cox, Secular City, p. 66. For Cox's view of Kennedy as an ideal, undogmatic pragmatist, see Chapter III, #3 (and also #4, above).

[2] Cited in John F. Kennedy: As We Remember Him, ed. Simpson, p. 193.

XUM

turned from annunciating to exhorting human mastery--"Let us resolve to be the masters, not the victims of history"[1]--and he follows it with several caveats against illusions. Even within the American University speech, Kennedy qualified his faith in man's ability to achieve a just and lasting peace. Believing that peace would not come in "a romantic moment of human redemption" but might come with "careful, detailed and well-staffed proposals" and not sharing Stevenson's faith in disarmament (especially in Stage III of the American disarmament plan, which he regarded as a vain millenial hope), Kennedy asserted:

> Absolute, infinite concepts of universal peace and good will . . . merely invite discouragement and incredulity. But a practical peace, based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution of human institutions, is not impossible. Peace does not require that each man love his neighbor--it requires only that they live together in mutual tolerance.[2]

Ruling out either an archaic unification of the world by force (as in the Pax Romana) or an historic integration of the world through love (as in the apocalyptic Biblical vision), Kennedy settled upon a constantly readjusted modernistic modus vivendi among diverse nations, negotiating in the light of common interests and sharing the same earth, basic wishes, and finitude, as the best way to peace:

> Let us not be blind to our differences--but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot now end our differences, at least we can make the world safe for diversity. For in the final analysis, our most basic link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. We are all mortal.[3]

Kennedy's shift from modernistic humanism to modernistic realism in his approach to peace and poverty, which was largely a matter of shifts of mood within the same position, was matched by a more fundamental though slow change from an archaic stance which viewed America as the light of the world with great confidence to a realistic modern posture which limited our role. While Kennedy boasted in his Inaugural Address to defend freedom anywhere it was threatened, he gradually came to better understand the limits of American power and sought to teach that lesson to the American people.[1] Building on his Inaugural assertion that we would not expect other nations always to support our views but only their own freedom, Kennedy contended that, though we could influence the world, we could not make it over or expect other countries to do everything we wanted them to.[2] Domestically, and even more internationally, the United States government could not control everything. "When we cannot bring our own people into full citizenship without acts of violence," Kennedy told an audience at the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, "how much harder it is to control events beyond our borders."[3] In his first State of the Union address, Kennedy said that the outcome was by no means certain whether this nation would endure.[4] Speaking of the world in general but thinking of Laos in particular, the President told Congress in his second State of the Union address in May 1961:

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 842.

[2] Ibid., pp. 433, 441-442, 823 (includes earlier speeches before colon).

[3] Cited in John F. Kennedy: As We Remember Him, ed. Simpson, p. 194.

> Experience has taught us that no nation has the power or the wisdom to solve all the problems of the world or manage its revolutionary tides; that extending our commitments does not always increase our security, . . . that nuclear weapons cannot prevent subversion; and that no free people can be kept free without will and energy of their own.[5]

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[1] Schlesinger, Crisis of Confidence, p. 60.

[2] Tom Wicker, Kennedy Without Tears: The Man Beneath the Myth, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964), p. 192.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 894.

[4] Reston, "What Was Killed Was the Promise," p. 224.

[5] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 728.

Finally, in a speech at the University of Washington, Kennedy again stressed the limits of American power and wisdom by denying terms to us which are applied to deity and renouncing the archaic conception of the United States as the world's Saviour: "We must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent nor omniscient—that we are only 6 per cent of the world's population—that we cannot impose our will upon the other 94 per cent of mankind—that we cannot right every wrong or reverse each adversity—and that therefore there cannot be an American solution to every world problem."[1]

Kennedy's growing belief in limited power exercised within a limited peace is congruent with historic as well as modern realism. It lives, I believe, primarily at a modern level in the recognition of the practical current fact of a world of nations with diverse interests and countervailing power. But it is also congruent with the negative side of a Niebuhrian Christian realism, which has limited hopes for man in history and condemns Christian liberalism for attempting to apply personal morality directly to public issues.[2] It is congruent with republican civil religion, as against the Puritans, in seeing institutional change as more effective than personal change in creating the good society.[3] And it is probably most congruent with a Catholic realism, which is Kennedy's own tradition, which sees the fallen order of the world as permanent and the task of government, which is both a result and a remedy for sin, to be as much as possible a dike against sin rather than an instrument of it. Kennedy entered politics,

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 566.

[2] Throughout Moral Man and Immoral Society, Reinhold Niebuhr criticizes the liberal illusion that nations can ever attain the level of unselfishness, sacrificial love, and righteousness that a few individuals have.

[3] Both puritans and republicans sought both virtue and prosperity; puritans argued that virtue led to prosperity while Jeffersonians argued that prosperity led to virtue: Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1952), Chapter 3.

Schlesinger tells us, less as a means of saving the world than of keeping it from getting worse, and he "loved to quote Lord Morley's maxim: 'Politics is one long second-best, where the choice often lies between two blunders.'"[1] Kennedy made no pretense to moral purity but knew the necessity of "dirty hands," took to the rough and tumble of politics as a lusty adventure, and knew the tragic side of life.[2] Novak sees this as Catholic:

> Because Kennedy was suave, many have failed to note how utterly *Catholic* his imagination was--not Catholic as Joseph McCarthy was or as Eugene McCarthy is or Daniel Berrigan, but Catholic nonetheless. The cold eyes that had "looked into the abyss," his cry in Berlin that "life is not fair," the excitement in his mind about words like "burden" and "sacrifice," a hard political judgment wed to poetic moralism, a high sense of liturgy, a sense of rapid passing time against an eternal backdrop, . . . a zest for battle, and an undisguised love of power and politics--all these were signs of a distinctly Catholic, even Irish Catholic, sensibility.[3]

Some items on the list have more to do with the actual faith of Catholics than with Catholic faith, are more Irish than Catholic, more archaic than historic, but there is a genuine dose of Catholic realism here, especially in the notion of an eternal backdrop before which all men, together, stand. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, all men are seen as sinners fallen short of God's glory; all men are mortal; all nations are made of one blood--especially in the Catholic vision where human solidarity outweighs any division into the elect and the damned--and all man's disputes are seen as passing things which God outlasts without involving himself inextricably in the cause of one against another. In this spirit, Kennedy told the Irish Parliament:

> Across the gulfs and barriers that now divide us, we must remember that there are no permanent enemies. Hostility today is a fact, but it is not a ruling law. The supreme reality of our time is our indivisibility as children of God and our common vulnerability on this planet.[4]

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[1] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 89; Novak, *Choosing Our King*, p. 270.

[2] Novak, *Choosing Our King*, pp. 67, 70-71, 84, 91, 116, 168, 223.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

[4] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 823.

In this vein, Kennedy kept a plaque on his White House desk with the motto: "O God, thy sea is so great, and my boat is so small." "John Kennedy never failed," concluded Cardinal Cushing, "to put his final confidence out beyond the world in the hands of the Unchanging God."[1]

Yet, with his shallow rootedness in Catholicism,[2] Kennedy did not really have enough historic realism to reconcile his modernistic confidence and his archaic doubts. Kennedy had "an abiding faith in man's ability to determine man's fate,"[3] but he also had an abiding skepticism about the human prospect in which he saw man's fate determining man. He confronted, at times, the edges of a universe which were not amenable to pragmatic manipulation, and, rather than putting his confidence in a gracious God who disposes what man proposes, he lost his faith in an ultimately benign order in the universe (contra Cox). The exaltation of hybris was followed by the nemesis of despair and of desperate action rather than stabilized in a limited confidence.[4] When disarmament negotiations bogged down, he felt that we might be condemned, like the heroes of the old Greek tragedies, to an ineluctable fate from which there was no escape though--with his archaic cult of courage--he manfully decided to make a supreme effort to break the deadlock.[5] Although Kennedy believed the tides of history were moving toward greater freedom, he also saw the world as in a state of uncontrollable change rushing in directions no one could foresee.[6] Though Schlesinger attempts a reconciliation, it is clear that none was effected. He writes:

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[1] Richard Cardinal Cushing, "Foreword," That Day With God, ed. Fine.

[2] See Chapter I, #3, above.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 351.

[4] A favorite theme of Greek tragedians and of Reinhold Niebuhr.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 455. See #3, above (courage).

[6] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 324.

XUM

> There was an interior strain between Kennedy's sense of human limitation and his sense of hope, between his skepticism about man and his his readiness to say "man can be as big as he wants; no problem of human destiny is beyond human beings." Others could find in him what qualities they wanted. They could claim him as a conservative, because of his sober sense of the frailty of man, the power of institutions and the frustrations of history, or as a progressive because of his vigorous confidence in reason, action, and the future. Yet within Kennedy himself these tensions achieved reunion and reconciliation. He saw history in its massive movements as shaped by forces beyond man's control. But he felt that there were still problems which man could resolve; and in any case, whether man could resolve these problems or not, the obligation was to carry on the struggle of existence. It was in essence, as Richard Goodwin later suggested, the Greek view where the hero must poise himself against the gods and, even with knowledge of the futility of the fight, press on to the end of his life until he meets his tragic fate.[1]

Active fatalism also characterized Kennedy's approach to his own life and death. He was aware of his own limits as a President and as a man, but he tried with courage and confidence to push those limits. His religious upbringing, his illness, his reading about the death of kings--all must have joined to give him an early sense of human mortality. The war experience brought death to his buddies and close to himself, leaving him with a permanent back ailment which he stoically endured. He was haunted by the poignancy of men dying young. "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" was his favorite poem, and he collected in a 1945 notebook two quotations describing the death of Raymond Asquith. "He went to his fate, cool, poised, resolute, matter-of-fact, debonair," said the one, and the other: "He loved his youth, and his youth has now become eternal. Debonair and brilliant and brave, he is now part of that immortal England which knows not age nor weariness nor defeat."[2] John Buchan's novel Pilgrim's Way, a favorite of Kennedy's from which he took the latter quotation, is an idyll of youth cut off in its prime, cut off from its promise or retaining its promise eternally through being cut off; its heroes have been blessed with all good things except "length of years," marching through life with boyish grace and keeping, at the "high noon" of their deaths, "all the freshness of the morning."[1] It expresses again, in poetic disguise, the archaic religion of war with its automatic vindication of death in battle, which fueled Kennedy's fatalistic cult of courage in the face of personal adversity just as it fueled his messianic cult of sacrifice for the sake of national empire, and it was not long before both motifs of this theme would be applied to Kennedy in his own death.[2]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 111. [2] Ibid., pp. 87-88.

Kennedy had a sense of the transiency and danger of the Presidency, knew the fate of past Presidents and the need for a Vice-President, who, like the hooded man at the feast, has little to do except to remind the emperor of his own mortality. He was rather fatalistic about his own death, taking no special precautions to prevent it and not letting fear of death impede him.[3] Although Kennedy may have underestimated the violent underlayer of American life and may have gone to Dallas partly to disprove its strength, he was not unaware of it as he made the trip.[4] Kennedy was deeply concerned at the spread of extremism, the latent streak of violence, the Gunsmoke ethic and mood of self-righteousness that was especially strong in Texas. Although he did not fit Dallas Morning News board chairman E. M. Dealey's stereotype of the "man on horseback" needed to lead this nation,[5] there was something of the courage and virility celebrated in the Western movie in Kennedy's coming into town despite danger to combat lawlessness.

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[1] Cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 118.

[2] See Chapters VIII, #5 and VII, #3D.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 622, 645, 97.

[4] Cf. Norman Mailer, cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 124.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 689.

"He was in a certain sense a hero and a martyr," said poet Robert Lowell, "going further than the office called for, perhaps fated to be killed."[1]

Far from the confident young Contemperor who would boldly move the nation forward to a new era, Schlesinger recognizes Kennedy as a man bold in facing personal danger, out of fatalism more than confidence, and not very audacious in leading the nation lest it fall apart and its "only reasonably well controlled" destructive instincts be unleashed. He observes:

> Kennedy had an anguished sense of the fragility of the membranes of civilization, stretched so thin over a nation so disparate in its composition, so tense in its interior relationships, so cunningly enmeshed in underground fears and antagonisms, so trapped by history in the ethos of violence. . . . His hope was that it might be possible to keep the country and the world moving fast enough to prevent unreason from rending the skin of civilization. But he had peered into the abyss and knew the potentiality of chaos. . . . He concluded an informal talk with representatives of national organizations by suddenly reading them Blanche of Castille's speech from "King John:"
>
> The sun's o'ercast with blood; fair day, adieu!
> Which is the side that I must go withal?
> I am with both; each army hath a hand;
> And in their rage, I having hold of both,
> They whirl asunder and dismember me.[2]

The next fall he was dead, his brain torn asunder by an assassin's bullet.

In the end, Kennedy's modernistic promise of adventure without limits, hope without cost, initiative without commitment, pragmatism without policy, and confidence without faith resulted in misadventure, dashed hopes, inertia, improvization, and hapless fate. Without historic political values to guide its specific realization, Kennedy's proclamation, as Contemperor, of a new era was at best an exciting if vacuous dream which left the world as it was with a certain gloss, at worst an excuse, when events caught up with him, for bold and desperate action. There were moments of glory and grace, to be sure:

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[1] Robert Lowell cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 101. For Kennedy as "hero" and "martyr," see Chapter VIII, #5 and #6.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 665.

a modern awareness of moral complexity superior to archaic self-righteousness (if somewhat lacking in historic moral discernment); a modern advocacy of a working truce among diverse nations based on mutual tolerance which is a prerequisite to any full organic historic peace; an historic notion of the solidarity of mankind over against a transcendent God. But the glory was transient and the growth slow, easily interrupted by the call to crisis in which Kennedy reverted to an archaic defense of an unquestioned national mission.

CHAPTER VI

COSMOCRATOR

> The purpose of the press conference was to appeal directly to the people; and, by the command of his presence . . . to win their support. He used them most theatrically at times of crisis when . . . he recharged the will of the people to futher sacrifice. At such moments, he would appear as exalted as an emperor of Byzantium at a public ceremony, receiving the acclamations of the subject people, then to turn towards heaven "to forward the people's wishes and prayers to divinity itself": not only the vicar of the Pankrator--the omnipotent ruler of the universe--but also the Autokrator on earth--the autonomous ruler--and the Kosmokrator--the ruler of the known (at least, the free) world.
>
> --Henry Fairlie

"Kennedy was at his best," writes James Reston, "in the highest moment of crisis."[1] Crisis brought out the best in him, according to Neustadt; then he was cool, collected, terse, emotions under tight control, displaying a keen awareness of human limits, using humour to break the tension. In crisis situations, Kennedy set up a personal command post, deliberately reached down to lower echelons for details, engaged in hard questioning of alternatives, drove to protect options from foreclosure by sheer urgency or incomplete argumentation, singled out the necessary from the merely possible, and then decided with alacrity.[2] Then he was no longer plagued by indecision and inaction but rose to the occasion and took on his role as dragon-slayer, the archaic Cosmocrator who would restore order to the realm, taking on his "role in a morality play, a ritual drama in which Americans expect him to slay evil," rooted

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[1] Reston, "What Was Killed Was the Promise," p. 225.

[2] Neustadt, Presidential Power, pp. 207, 203.

XUM

in "the founders' exultant belief that America is truly God's country, the nation with the task of proving that a free society could thrive."[1] Kennedy took on the role manfully. Kennedy and his "crisis managers" portrayed themselves as lonely and heroic men, who are never quite free of the heavy burdens of their high office of which lesser and more carefree men like you and me are blessedly ignorant, who suffer on our behalf, existentially confronting the issues of life and death, bearing the agony of decision which reaches its climax during crises.[2] There was a certain ecstasy in this agony, a glory in the burden of "charismatic" (or better, "cosmocratic") leadership, as extraordinary times elevated the extraordinary qualities of Kennedy and his men.[3]

It is clear that Kennedy wanted to play the role of Cosmocrator, in a sense "contrived" to create the situations in which he could play it, and became "addicted" to it. There is something in the nature of a self-fulfilling prophecy at work here, especially when the prophet has immense instrumental as well as metaphysical power. Since the postwar Cold War began--perhaps even since 1933--the United States has lived in a constant state of readiness, what Thomas Griffith terms a sense of "continuing emergency."[4] As we noted, Kennedy had proclaimed a new and perilous era during his presidential campaign and in his Inaugural Address, and in his first State of the Union address he averred that we were drawing nearer to maximum danger each day. He felt that a democracy needs shocks to keep on its toes, sought to raise taxes to increase the feeling of sacrifice, and raised a sense of danger in his talk about fallout shelters which was more than even he had bargained for.[1] Yet the escalation in the process is hardly surprising. Writes Fairlie:

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[1] Time, July 26, 1968, cited by Sellers, Public Ethics, p. 24.

[2] John McDermott, "The Crisis Managers," a review of To Move A Nation by Roger Hilsman, New York Review of Books, September 14, 1967, p. 4.

[3] For the encouragement that extraordinary times gives to personal charisma, see Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 126. For the lack of such times until Kennedy created them, see Chapter I, #2, above.

[4] Griffith, "In Defense of Politicians," p. 33.

> The politics of expectation—the politics of crisis—the politics of confrontation: the progression is all but unavoidable. The people are aroused to a high expectation, not only of what politics may accomplish, but of their importance; in such a strenuous climate, problems are magnified into crises; in the still more strenuous atmosphere of crisis, solutions are sought in confrontation.[2]

Once a situation could be defined as a crisis requiring confrontation, then Kennedy could show his true colours as Cosmocrator. "The American people were, for three years, kept in a state of anxious expectation of the perils which beset them," concluded Fairlie, "and of stupified admiration of the brilliance of the administration which rescued them."[3]

Neustadt tells us that Kennedy combined "emergencies in policy" with "politics as usual."[4] It is a telling phrase. The two do not really harmonize, for the former subverts the latter; crisis-making and crisis-solving soon becomes the dominant motif, rendering "politics as usual" as ordinary, boring, and second-best. Kateb tells us that however much Kennedy wanted to promote peace and fight hunger, his abstract intention kept giving way to pressures of one sort or another[5]—and surely one of the sources of pressure was the voraciousness of crisis cosmocracy at the expense of the tedious long-term work needed to make the world better. Crisis management simply does not fit in as one among several tools of government; "if crisis is made an instrument of policy," says Fairlie, "then policy becomes the slave of crisis."[6] With only a pragmatic and operational approach which could not shape events but only react to them,

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[1] Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 57.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 14. [3] Ibid., p. 258. [4] Ibid.

[5] Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 54.

[6] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 306.

"fire-fighting" became the rage, absorbing the energy of the Kennedy administration, while "fire prevention" was lost in the shuffle.[1] The time between crises simply became dead time, a time of waiting. Kennedy would wait for a crisis to develop until at the point of maximum danger he could intervene as Cosmocrator and display his power. In such situations, there was a "recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all our current difficulties,"[2] making up for all the lost time and solving the whole mess instantly.

In that atmosphere, discrimination was lost, and whatever intelligence was brought to bear was only a slave of the situation, purely instrumental and technical rather than challenging and discursive; indeed, the availability of the latest tools of intelligence in the narrowest s sense tended to exacerbate uncritical crisis thinking as "the Kennedys thrilled over the technological gadgetry of crisis situation rooms that made macho solutions more tempting."[3] In the absense of a broader intelligence informed by political values, there was no telling the important from the urgent as every untoward development in the world was magnified into a crisis. Unlike the Soviet planners who "avoid the trap of assigning to each issue the same—necessarily absolute and transcendent—importance," Charles O. Lerche, Jr. saw the Kennedy team believing that "each crisis is as important as any other; all are absolutely critical and call into question far-reaching matters of national prestige, survival, and world role." Like a series of unrelated poker, bridge, or football games (rather than an extended Russian chess game), the American team tended to

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[1] Edward Weinthal and Charles Barrett, Facing the Brink, cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 259. See also Chapter V, #4.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 304, 107.

[3] Griffith, "In Defense of Politicians," p. 33.

"conceive policy as a series of direct Soviet-American confrontations, separated by more or less static pauses for practice," assigning top priority to whatever crisis is current and playing it as if their lives depended on it in search of an unbroken string of victories in an undefeated season.[1] Aspiring to greatness not just occasionally but all the time, the Kennedy men believed that it was "one minute to midnight . . . all over the globe; and they were driven by the fear that, if they did not act before the clock struck, they would all seem to be pumpkins."[2] Unable to distinguish between great crises and minor crises and non-crises and unwilling to distinguish between crucial skirmishes and expendable skirmishes and non-skirmishes--except sometimes after a loss--Kennedy as Cosmocrator saw the Soviet dragon, in various disguises, lurking throughout the world ready to best us and demanding to be forthrightly bested.

Out of the welter of crises that arose during the Kennedy years, seven stand out as especially notable: the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Berlin crisis, the steel dispute, the Cuban missile crisis, the drive for a nuclear test ban treaty, the culmination of the early civil rights struggle, and the beginnings of serious involvement in Viet Nam. Not all of these events were cosmocratic but all were dramatic and memorable, symptomatic of the notion of "politics as theatre," which influenced both the Kennedy method of doing politics and even more the retelling of the Kennedy myth. Writes Fairlie:

> Anyone who has returned to the story of the administration of John Kennedy must come away with the impression that he has been watching a film in which the narrative has been cut to a succession of barely related events. As the frames jump, he is jolted from episode to episode, in which the same heroic figure is always engaged in spectacular displays of the same uninhibited personal leadership.[3]

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[1] Charles O. Lerche, Jr., United States Naval Proceedings, May.1962, cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 299, 306.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 310.

[3] Ibid., p. 207.

The episodic character of the tale is quite obvious--and perhaps excusably so since it is a dramatic piece--in the United States Information Agency memorial film "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," which splices together various scenes from Kennedy's life (interspersed also with funeral scenes).[1] But the same pattern also persists in the writings of Kennedy operatives, biographers, and assorted apologists who tend to accentuate the crisis episodes in which Kennedy "earned his pay" and to slight the days the dragon slept when no lightning was needed and the prosaic tasks of mere government went neglected. We will fall into that pattern here as well in order to highlight the serialization of policy which was part of the Kennedy cosmocratic method but with some attention to the continuous threads woven through the various episodes and to the real though halting changes in Kennedy's cosmocratic approach as he finally "hit his stride" during the final year of his life.[2]

I

John Kennedy "inherited" the Bay of Pigs invasion, or so we are told. The plan had been hatched during the Eisenhower administration, continued to be developed by the opposition bureaucracts in the Central Intelligence Agency whom Kennedy had retained,[3] and unwittingly received Kennedy's own support when, strictly for "rhetorical flourish," he had endorsed strengthening the Cuban "fighters for freedom" during his presidential campaign, hoping that his tough stand on Cuba would offset in the public mind the "soft" position on Quemoy and Matsu that he had just taken.[4]

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[1] For more on memorial films, see Chapter VIII, #2, below.

[2] There is some truth in Donald's claim that "all the splendid qualities of mind and temper that characterized Kennedy as President came to the fore most vividly at the end (John F. Kennedy and the New Frontier, p. xix.)

[3] See Chapters IV, #3 and V, #4 for Kennedy's motives and their stance.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 212.

XUM

Having once backed the plan, however inadvertantly, Kennedy declined to back down, regarding "disapproval of the plan as a show of weakness inconsistent with his general stance."[1] And in the euphoric spirit with which the Kennedy administration began--long on dreams and venturesomeness, short on facts, experience, and values--it was presumed that young, tough, daring, intelligent men could mold the world to their will. Hugh Sidey noted, "It was a bold plan, the kind that appealed to the Kennedy spirit. This kind of action; the Kennedy brothers felt, fitted the New Frontier. It was full of chance, certainly, but it was audacious, glamorous, and new. It was irresistible."[2]

There were some in the Congress and in the Administration who did resist the plan and others who might have done so had there been a forum for deliberation suitable to their temper. J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, insisted that the proposed invasion of Cuba was wildly out of proportion to the threat, contending that the Castro regime was a "thorn in the flesh, not a dagger in the heart," and he denounced the whole idea as compromising our moral position in the world by perpetrating the kind of hypocrisy we denounced in others in a way that neither the rest of the world nor our own consciences could forget.[3] Schlesinger, though he was reticent to speak at meetings, sent the President two memoranda warning him that bullying intervention in Cuba would destroy the new image of the United States and douse the reawakening world faith in America.[4] Backing Fulbright, he reiterated that Cuba did not present "so grave and compelling a threat to our national security as to justify a course of action which much of the world will interpret as calculated aggression against a small nation in defiance both of treaty obligations and of the international standards as we have repeatedly asserted against the Communist world."[1] Seeing no justification for our intervention, other nations would sympathize with David rather than Goliath, he warned, in effect. Chester Bowles, as his friends later made c clear in the press, was horrified and opposed the invasion in a long memorandum that went no further than Rusk.[2] Rusk and others in the State Department kept their reservations to themselves. In the archaic-modernistic atmosphere of the Cabinet Room, where militarism ruled and quantification was in vogue,[3] those with "irrelevant" considerations transcending the expertise and tough posture of the military men were afraid to speak. Schlesinger discloses:

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[1] Sorensen paraphrased by Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 58.

[2] Hugh Sidey cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 183.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 236. [4] Ibid., pp. 226, 239.

> The advocates of the adventure had a rhetorical advantage. They could strike virile poses and talk of tangible things--fire power, air strikes, landing craft and so on. To oppose the plan, one had to invoke intangibles--the moral position of the United States, the reputation of the President, the response of the United Nations, "world public opinion" and other such concepts. These matters were as much the institutional concern of the State Department as military hardware was of Defense. But just as the members of the White House staff had sat in the Cabinet Room failing in their job of protecting the President, so the representatives of the State Department failed in defending the diplomatic interests of the nation. I could not help feeling that the desire to prove to the CIA and the Joint Chiefs that they were not soft-headed idealists but were really tough guys, too, influenced State's representatives at the Cabinet table.[4]

Disregarding negative advice, spoken and unspoken, and casting caution to the winds, Kennedy launched an invasion at Cuba's Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1971. The tale is quickly told. A landing force of some 1400 anti-Castro Cuban exiles--organized, trained, armed, transported, and directed by the CIA--was crushed, in less than three hours, by a Cuban government force which soon numbered up to 20,000 men. Although Kennedy had sanctioned an air strike on Castro's planes on April 15 under a soon-exposed cover story, he held fairly fast to his exclusion of any direct, overt participation of American armed forces in Cuba by canceling a slated second air strike and by refusing to openly introduce American air and naval power to back the brigade being slaughtered on the beach.

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 238.

[2] Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 33.

[3] See Chapter IV, #3, above.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 240.

The world was aroused by this country's deliberate deception in pulling off the first air strike and appalled both at the invasion and at its failure. Khrushchev denounced the invasion and pledged all necessary assistance to the Cuban government. America's position in the Third World was compromised but bounced back from the shock rather quickly with some credit given to Kennedy for not involving American forces directly. England weathered the shock with enough faith still in Kennedy that there was little public outcry. Western Europe, which had invested heavily in Kennedy as the last hope of the West, felt widespread disenchantment as American prestige plummeted.[1]

In the United States, Kennedy was denounced by Harvard graduate students in a telegram, by Norman Mailer and C. Wright Mills in a demonstration and a telegram respectively, by protest meetings on a dozen campuses, by 3,000 people attending a Fair Play For Cuba rally in New York City, and by pickets in front of the White House. But "most Americans, *of course*, rallied to their President in the moment of national crisis,"[2] perhaps confirming their placing him in a father role,[3] rather than blaming

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[1] Sorensen, *Kennedy*, pp. 332, 337; Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 257, 473, 272-273.

[2] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 267-268 (italics mine).

[3] See Chapter III, #3, above.

XUM

him. A Gallup poll found that 65 per cent of American surveyed agreed with Kennedy's opposition to military intervention while only 24 per cent said that the Marines should have been sent in; another Gallup poll showed an unprecedented 82 per cent behind the Administration. "It's just like Eisenhower," Kennedy quipped. "The worse I do, the more popular I get."[1]

The generally calm and favorable public reaction was encouraged by Kennedy's own composure and self-control as he sought to take the rout in stride and to guard the nation's unity and spirit, bind up its wounds, and rally its morale.[2] The failure of the invasion shocked Kennedy and strained his confidence because he was not used to losing, but he went on governing without a break and with no change in his manner, temper, or humour, displaying in his handling of the aftermath, according to Neustadt, "a superb feel for the imagery befitting an incumbent of the White House."[3] While some sought to shift blame for the fiasco onto others, Kennedy, as President, publically took sole responsibility for the adventure on himself rather than publically blaming those who had misled him, thereby creating an image of magnanimity as well as foreclosing any investigation into the shoddy decision-making process which had led to the ill-conceived invasion.[4]

According to his apologists, Kennedy gained a new sense of proportion from the Bay of Pigs failure. Even while making the decision not to rescue the Cuban rebel brigade, Kennedy realized that the defeat would be an incident rather than a disaster and that the loss of prestige—which

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 277, 273.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 345; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 317.

[3] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 205.

[4] Sorensen writes: "By taking full blame upon himself, he was winning the admiration of both career servants and the public, avoiding partisan investigations and attacks and discouraging further attempts by those involved to leak their versions and accusations (Kennedy, p. 346)."

XUM

would result in his being "kicked in the can for a couple of weeks" both for building the Cuban exiles up and for letting them down when their invasion floundered—was less significant than the "substance of power,"[1] thus moving away from an archaic viewpoint in which no failure is tolerable toward a modern concentration on the bare realities of power relationships. As a result, Kennedy learned to choose his confrontations more carefully and quietly backed down in Laos, modernistically realizing that it was not a land "worthy of engaging the attention of great powers" rather than continuing to defend it archaically as a "bastion of freedom."[2] Kennedy also attempted to demote narrow expertise as a result of the Bay of Pigs experience. "How could I have been so far off base?" he asked. "All my life I have known better than to depend on the experts. How could I have been so stupid to let them go ahead?"[3] Thereafter, Kennedy resolved never again to be overawed by professional military advice and to check specialists with generalists.

In spite of this apparent demotion of expertise, however, the penchant of Kennedy and his men for toughness, for an ideology of confrontation despite their disavowal of ideology, was little affected by the Bay of Pigs disaster, and Schlesinger warned Kennedy in a memorandum to avoid the kind of decision-making process over Berlin which was so far showing little sign of learning from the Cuban lesson. Schlesinger warned against the tendency to define an issue, "to put it crudely, as: Are you chicken or not?" He pointed out:

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 258.

[2] Ibid., pp. 307, 303. Kateb contends that Kennedy had been strongly inclined to intervene in Laos ("Kennedy as Statesman," p. 56). Kennedy himself remarked, "If it had not been for Cuba, we might be about to intervene in Laos."

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 346.

> When someone proposes something which seems tough, hard, put-up-or-shut-up, it is difficult to oppose it without seeming soft, idealistic, mushy, etc. Yet, as Chip Bohlen has often said, nothing would clarify more the discussion of policy toward the Soviet Union than the elimination of the words "hard" and "soft" from the language. People who had doubts about Cuba suppressed those doubts lest they seem "soft." It is obviously important that such fears not constrain free discussion of Berlin.[1]

Yet, despite Schlesinger's warning, the archaic cult of toughness retained its sway in the Kennedy administration. Whatever selectivity might have been gained in choosing confrontations more carefully, the idea that foreign policy might be furthered better by means other than confrontation never penetrated the Kennedy strategists. With his "agonistic" conception of world politics, Kennedy was continually trying to prove the strength of the United States (which was never in doubt), feared himself or the country appearing weak, and accorded great weight to appearances just as he said he would not.[2] Not only was the appearance of power a large factor in the subsequent Cuban missile crisis,[3] but even shortly before his death Kennedy asserted in a speech in Florida that "Fidel Castro still remains a major danger to the United States" despite the objections of men like George McGovern that the amount of attention paid to Cuba was way out of proportion to its importance in any modern rational calculation of power.[4] Whatever modernism Kennedy showed was a kind of afterthought helping him to get out gracefully from situations into which his archaism led him rather than preventing such situations, and it may be that his switch from finishing the job to caution, from "vigorous" to "realistic" leadership, in the midst of the Bay of Pigs invasion encouraged Khrushchev to pursue his secret Cuban missile strategy.[5] Yet the biggest lack, as usual, was that of historic political wisdom. "John Kennedy is stronger in dynamism than in wisdom and experience," concluded Le Figaro after the Bay of Pigs invasion.[1] Kennedy's resolutions afterwards hardly changed that. Kennedy blamed faulty intelligence, in part, for the rout and concluded that "we will have to deal with the CIA." But that was the wrong lesson. "It was not faulty intelligence that was to blame," asserts Fairlie; "it was the failure to bring to the intelligence, faulty or not, a political judgment such as enabled William Fulbright and Chester Bowles and Arthur Schlesinger to question the project."[2] Even this Kennedy recognized in his resolution to check specialists with generalists, and yet what he never got--or never heard--but really needed was advice rooted not only in a wider intelligence but in an historic sense of value. Fulbright turned out to be a hawk during the next Cuban confrontation; Schlesinger was tolerated but his warnings against the constraints of toughness went unheeded; Bowles was demoted to a meaningless post the following fall in the "Thanksgiving Day massacre" in reprisal for letting his critical position on the Bay of Pigs plan be aired. Except for easing out of Laos, Kennedy left the Bay of Pigs crisis no more ready to question his archaic ideology of confrontation and perhaps less willing to listen to those who did.

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 360.

[2] Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 58. [3] See #4, below.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 346; Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 23.

[5] Cater, "Do-It-Yourself Presidential Power," p. 215.

II

The Berlin crisis of 1961 was a long time coming and never quite materialized. The rhetoric and readiness were there, but a final confrontation was avoided when Khrushchev--who had provoked the crisis in a January 6 speech by threatening to sign a peace treaty with East Germany (thus terminating the legal basis for a Western presence in Berlin)--found another way out in August. Especially as he relied on Acheson's advice,

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 183. [2] Ibid., p. 194.

XUM

Kennedy viewed the whole crisis as "a test of willsalmost as an end in itself rather than as a means to a political end;" he pictured Khrushchev as out to test the American will to resist and looked upon any backing down on our part as shattering to the United States as a world power and undermining confidence in our commitments anywhere.[1] In this spirit, he entered the Vienna parlay with Khrushchev and got nowhere as each stuck to his guns, Khrushchev firmly reiterating his intention to sign the peace treaty and Kennedy firmly opposing any change in the status quo of West berlin. Kennedy built up American conventional forces so that the U.S. would not be pushed into a nuclear exchange prematurely because of lack of appropriate intermediate measures (i.e., intermediate between humiliation and holocaust), but he also made it clear that we would go all out to defend West Berlin. Unwilling to conciliate prematurely or to rule out nuclear war, Kennedy remarked, in his usual agonistic way, "If Khrushchev wants to rub my nose in the dirt, it's all over."[2]

The solemnity of our vows and the ultimacy of the risk gave the Berlin crisis a religious cast. In July 1960, Kennedy had said, "We should make it very clear that we are not going to concede our position on Berlin, that we are going to meet our commitment to defend the liberty of the people of West Berlin, and that if Mr. Khrushchev pushes us to the ultimate, we are prepared to meet our obligation."[3] On July 25, 1961, in a televised address to the nation, Kennedy said:

> West Berlin has now become the greatest testing place of Western courage and will, a focal point where our solemn commitments . . . and Soviet ambitions now meet in basic confrontation. We cannot and will not permit the Communists to drive us out of Berlin, either gradually

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[1] Kateb,"Kennedy as Statesman," p. 57.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 363.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 666.

> or by force. For the fulfillment of our pledge to that city is essential to the morale and security of Western Germany, to the unity of Western Europe, and to the faith of the entire free world. . . . The solemn vow each of us gave West Berlin in time of peace will not be broken in time of danger. If we do not meet our commitments to Berlin, where will we later stand?[1]

In the speech, Kennedy also announced that he would seek an additional 3.25 billion dollars for the defense budget, would call up certain reserves and national guard units, would procure new weapons and enlarge the program of civil defense, creating a bomb shelter panic.[2] He ended the speech by reflecting on the heavy and constant burdens of his office as President and by asking for the advice, support, and, above all, the prayers of the people.[3]

Although Kennedy spoke of a desire not to let military considerations dominate and mentioned our duty to mankind to seek a peaceful solution, mindful of the devastation of nuclear war, the press took the speech to represent a triumph of the hard line (which Acheson had advanced), and Krhushchev took it as an ultimatum, matching it with a speech of similar tone on August 7. On August 13, barricades and roadblocks, which were the beginning of the Berlin Wall, were erected to cut the flow of refugees from East Berlin. Except for a formal protest to Moscow four days later, nothing was done by the United States to challenge the Wall. But an additional contingent of 1500 American troops was dispatched down the autobahn into West Berlin "as a reminder of our commitment" to West Berlin and "our hostage to that intent."[4] Kennedy also sent Vice-President Johnson to West Berlin to rally their hope and their will and to restate this nation's commitment in the language, personally approved by the President, of our most solemn pledge by concluding his speech with words from the Declaration of Independence, "And in support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."[1]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 666-667.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 364.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 667.

[4] Ibid., p. 669.

Convinced of American resolution and having stopped the intolerable flow of refugees, Khrushchev retained his image of strength by resuming nuclear tests on August 30 and was sufficiently satisfied with the Western response to Berlin in the new Kennedy-Khrushchev correspondence and in the start of negotiations that he postponed the threatened signing of the peace treaty with East Germany until December 31, 1961, and thereafter indefinitely.

Thus, whether by divine providence, on which we said we firmly relied, or by Khrushchev's sagacity or by sheer chance, an ultimate confrontation over Berlin was avoided but surely not from an unwillingness to make the ultimate gamble. I. F. Stone had identified Kennedy's preparation of the public mind to gamble all if necessary on Berlin as the "real mobilization," and he asserted that "our moral scruples and our good sense must first be conscripted."[2] But they were. Neither historic values nor modern sense was brought to bear, for neither would assign ultimacy to the defense of a single foreign city (apart from an assessment of the relative good or evil involved or a calculation of the degree to which our national interests would be served or disserved), for the one knows another ultimate and the other knows no ultimate. But the American people were ready to follow their Cosmocrator into the ultimate archaic sacrifice over Berlin,

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 670.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 316.

XUM

responding to his speech with a bomb shelter panic that exceeded his intentions. Having learned to "think the unthinkable," even priests were discussing the morality of whether it was all right to kill an invader to one's bomb shelter. Having made Berlin into a question of United States-Soviet Union confrontation over the balance of power, a contest of wills without limits, "no one knew when either side, convinced that the other would back down, might precipitate a situation from which neither would back down."[1] Berlin passed but taught no lesson. "Only flexibility," writes Kateb, "only an avoidance of seeing one's total position implicated in every situation, only a willingness to give up the ideology of confrontation, could help insure that intolerable situations would not emerge."[2] But Kennedy was not yet willing to give up such an archaic ideology, and the next foreign crisis would bring us even closer to the brink.[3]

III

John Kennedy's first major domestic crisis, the steel dispute, was as short as Berlin was drawn out, but the theme of sacrifice was the same. On April 10, 1962, Roger Blough, President of United States Steel Corporation, handed Kennedy a mimeographed press release indicating that his company was raising the price of steel $6 per ton; the next day five major steel companies followed suit; by April 13, all had rescinded the increase. What intervened was a bravura performance by the President in which--with no direct authority in the matter--he invoked every bit of quasi-authority he could muster by holding a press conference, by instigating Justice Department, Federal Trade Commission, and Senate Anti-Trust Subcommittee investigations, and by persuading Inland, Armco, and Kaiser steel companies not to raise their prices. By mobilizing everything at his command in a kind of feverish blitz, Kennedy got his price recision.

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[1] Sorensen cited by Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 58.

[2] Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 58.

[3] See #4, below (Cuban missile crisis).

It is clear that Kennedy's motives were personal and archaic rather than policy-oriented and ideological. As we noted, Kennedy was a technocrat in the economic area without convictions or any preference for public or private enterprise.[1] He had told businessmen that he saw no inevitable clash between business and government and had invited them to become part of "a full-fledged alliance." Unlike the New Dealers, Kennedy was no enemy of big business but wanted it to be part of his "consensus," especially in support of his foreign policy goals (about which he cared most). Despite his overtures, he had been spurned; it was the steelmen's refusal to submit to his leadership that angered Kennedy as much as anything else. His vendetta was not purely personal, much less merely a response to a potential setback in his fight against inflation, but involved his exalted view of himself as President. Like Teddy Roosevelt, Kennedy saw himself as "an impartial arbiter devoted to the national good, and a custodian of the stern virtues without which the United States could not play its destined role of mastery in the world theater. . . . Psychologically, he identified himself with the authority of the State."[2] Adds Fairlie, "John Kennedy responded to the action of the steel corporations as a challenge to his own mastery, a response in which there was no more political conviction and no more conceptual strategy than there was behind Theodore Roosevelt's spasmodic attacks on the trusts."[3] Kennedy felt that he had been duped, that he had been doublecrossed into getting steelworkers to accept a minimal settlement, using the prestige and powers of the Presidency in that effort, only to have the steel companies raise their prices and thereby abuse his trust. Especially because Kennedy saw the price hike as an affront and challenge to the office of the Presidency which put his office on the line and his prestige at stake, he was determined to "raise hell" until he got a price recision.[1]

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[1] See Chapter V, #3, above.

[2] Richard Hofstadter applied to Kennedy by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 243.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 243.

With his immense power to define situations, to conjure up crises, and to shape public opinion, Kennedy vilified the power- and profit-hungry steel executives in his press conference for their "irresponsible defiance of the public interest" in the face of grave crises abroad to which the American people were being asked to respond with restraint and sacrifice. "We are confronted with grave crises in Berlin and Southeast Asia," he said. "We are asking reservists to leave their homes and their families for months on end and servicemen to risk their lives. . . . Four were killed in the last two days in South Vietnam."[2] Not accusing them of economic wrongdoing but of the far greater sin of defection from his archaic statist religion, Kennedy concluded, "Some time ago I asked each American to consider what he would do for his country and I asked the steel companies. In the last twenty-four hours we had their answer."[3]

Although Kennedy was conciliatory toward Roger Blough after his victory over him, demobilized pressures against the steel companies three days after their surrender, and tried not to alienate businessmen (despite his having repeated his father's comment that all businessmen were sons of bitches during the heat of the crisis), businessmen did not take kindly to their vilification and forced capitulation. Accustomed to being the

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 490, 498, 503-506, 508; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 584, 587.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 200.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 507. Sorensen italicizes this final line to indicate it is among those Kennedy added to stiffen his speech.

"first estate" in America,[1] they resented being brought to heel by a mere politician; with "liturgical fervor" businessmen joined Republicans in denouncing Kennedy's handling of the steel dispute as a display of naked dictatorial power which threatened America's freedom[2]—freedom which they understood not in the archaic sense in which Kennedy defended it but in the modernistic sense of freedom to pursue private interests within a free enterprise system. Though Kennedy did not pursue policies contrary to business interests with any vigor thereafter, the continuing wound of the steel crisis defeat and its symbolic reprisal was expressed in the refusal of business leaders to show deference to the President by rising when he entered the room at a meeting in the summer of 1963 which Kennedy had called to discuss civil rights strategy.

Public opinion, by contrast, rallied behind the President in his steel stand. Newspapers applauded his action around the globe, with Latin Americans being especially heartened by the President's apparent independence from American business.[3] Although the President tried not to humiliate Big Steel, the dispute was clearly a victory for the American Presidency in the eyes of the people. The New York Times called it a "72-hour drama with an all-star cast" in its headline and made clear who won and who lost. Time magazine went further:

> The ferocity of his attack on steel alienated and angered many a businessman, . . . but there can be no doubt that John Kennedy had won a popular victory. Beyond question, the great majority of Americans reacted angrily to U.S. Steel's price increase announcement. The reaction was instinctive and Kennedy exploited it skillfully. . . . He made the steelmen look like Milquetoasts.[4]

Klapp portrays the dispute as a battle of rival champions; both men were powerful and the fight had been close, but Blough clearly was bested. "Kennedy acted," Klapp rhapsodizes, "with the sturdy confidence of King Arthur swinging his great sword."[1]

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[1] See Sellers, Public Ethics. Ours is a commercial society. Even churches pride themselves on being run like businesses.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 587. [3] Ibid., pp. 585, 588.

[3] Time, April 20, 1962 cited by Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 80.

Kennedy's creation and handling of the steel crisis was clearly in an archaic cosmocratic mold. No modern approach, including the dispassionate technocratic tinkering which Kennedy advocated, would justify so ferocious attack nor settle, in Estes Kefauver's words, for a treatment so "episodic and lacking in standards" in place of a "systematic and regularized approach."[2] Indeed, the steel crisis was counterproductive in terms of long-term restraint on steel prices, for the steel companies raised prices in April 1963 and in October 1963; Kennedy was "hampered by the fact that he had reacted so vigorously in 1962,"[3] knowing that he couldn't keep raising hell each time ("there's no sense in raising hell and then not being successful," he remarked after the April 1963 hike)[4] and having no long-range strategy in its place. As usual, historic moral values and restraints were not brought to bear as Kennedy mobilized agencies designed to be independent of him in his all-out war on the steel companies. "It is dangerously wrong," argued Charles Reich, adding the missing moral note, "for an angry President to loose his terrible arsenal of power for the purpose of intimidation and coercion of private companies and citizens."[5] But for Kennedy all that counted was the archaic need to win the showdown, to best the opponent that had called his bluff, to rebuff the affront to his Presidency, and to reassert the supremacy of the state and its national mission over private and commercial concerns.

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[1] Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 80.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 203. [3] Ibid. (citing Louis Koenig).

[4] See Chapter V, #3, above.

[5] Charles Reich cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 204.

IV

The Cuban missile crisis in October 1962 was surely the most dramatic and crucial crisis in the Kennedy years, an exciting contest of wills and total mobilization like the steel crisis, a readiness for ultimate risk like the Berlin crisis, once more a dispute over Cuba like the Bay of Pigs invasion--only this time with a determination to follow through with all the stops out at the very brink of an all-out nuclear war. With no one to praise to blame but themselves as they monopolized decision-making, the crisis was seen as the Kennedys "finest hour,"[1] and Kennedy memorialized the fortnight of crisis by specially accentuating those thirteen days on walnut-sized calendars which he gave to each of his chief advisors as a momento. The crisis was plenty memorable for the people as well who, like combat soldiers, remembered where they were and how they reacted when the superpowers stared each other down,[2] and it was brought to mind again when A.B.C. presented a dramatic recreation of the crisis in its documentary "The Missiles of October" in December 1974. It may also be seen as a "watershed of history, . . . the end of one era, of constant chilling confrontation with the Soviet Union, and the beginning of another, of guarded, uneasy search for an embryonic detente."[3]

When Kennedy first learned on October 15 of the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, he took no position, but it was clear that he viewed it in an archaic, agonistic frame as a chance to prove his toughness in the face of danger and deception. Having promised vigorous reaction to Soviet missiles in Cuba on the supposition that they were not present, Kennedy felt that he had to deliver on them (lest backing off be seen as being soft on Communism) and was miffed at the Russian deception. "They can't

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[1] David Halberstam, "An Eerie Moment When Time Seemed to Freeze," TV Guide, December 14, 1974, p. 3.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

XUM

deceive us and come up winners, not if we hope to survive," he said. Kennedy convened the "executive committee" of the National Security Council for a week of secret deliberations, reserving to himself and his crisis-managers the lonely agony of deciding the nation's fate, even underscoring their special chosenness with a line from Robert Grave's poem, "There is only one who knows, / And he is the one who fights the bull."[1]

With the President frequently absent so as not to constrain discussion as well as to maintain a facade of normalcy, deliberation on the Cuban missile crisis began with an entertainment of all possible options and scenarios without restriction from moral considerations. Robert McNamara began with a modernistic position, contending that the Soviet missiles did not change the balance of power, implying that we should do nothing about them. But others contended that the difference in warning time between the fifteen minutes it would take a missile launched from the Soviet Union to reach the United States and the less than three minutes for Cuba-launched missiles increased the danger significantly; that a change in the balance of power, in appearance if not in fact, was sufficient cause for action since appearances contribute to reality in matters of national will and world leadership;[2] that the Soviet action and especially its duplicity in repeatedly denying the placement of offensive weapons in Cuba was an affront to the United States; and that domestic pressures would be pushing the President to do something about those weapons, especially in the light of his promise to do so. An air strike, originally thought of as "surgical" but later as more comprehensive with the probability of a subsequent invasion if necessary, was a strong favorite for a time, but the dangers of swift escalation and Robert Kennedy's contention that a surprise attack was morally reprehensible reduced support for that approach. "How in the love of God can President Kennedy order a sneak attack on a Latin American country?" asked Robert,[1] arguing that surprise blows on small nations were not in our tradition, that we were fighting for something more than survival, that a sneak attack would constitute a betrayal of our heritage and our ideals.[2] The ingression of a moral argument was remarkable. "Your moral arguments have never occurred to me, Bobby," said Dean Rusk, "but I must admit you are right."[3] Rusk then endorsed the blockade scenario and several others with him, helping to turn the tide. John Kennedy's own desire to avoid a--perhaps final--nuclear war, if possible, was also brought to bear by his most intimate advisors as an argument for the blockade, which was also touted as being more flexible and giving Khrushchev more reaction time while the air strike was pictured as leading immediately to invasion and even holocaust (in which case those who had miscalculated its consequences would not be around to know they had been wrong).[4] Finally, with only three out of thriteen advisors preferring an air strike (plus Fulbright when he was later informed), a blockade of ships carrying offensive weapons to Cuba--officially called a quarantine to reduce implications that it was an act of war--was decided upon with the options of increasing the type of cargo quarantined or of taking sterner measures to be retained but not to be announced. Although proposals for negotiation, such as those Stevenson proposed (removal of Soviet missiles under United Nations supervision and a continuing United Nations presence in Cuba in exchange for an American no-invasion guarantee and relinquishment of Guantanamo Naval Base), were regarded as a sign of moral and military weakness or at least premature at that stage,[1] some provision was made for diplomatic moves to accompany the quarantine. In the meantime, the Navy deployed 180 ships in the Caribbean Sea under cover of long-scheduled manoeuvres; 40,000 Marines and 100,000 army troops were assembled in Florida; and United States missile crews were put on maximum alert.

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[1] American Broadcasting Company, "The Missiles of October."

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 576.

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[1] A.B.C., "Missiles of October."

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 738.

[3] A.B.C., "Missiles of October."

[4] Halberstam, "An Eerie Moment," p. 3.

Having allowed the Cuban situation to develop into a crisis during the week of secret deliberations and informing allies and Congressmen only hours before his announcement, affording no time for their advice or criticism, Kennedy disclosed the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba and America's response to it simultaneously—hoping thereby to control events rather than being dragged along by them—in a televized speech to a largely unsuspecting nation and world on October 15. Making it a test case, Kennedy branded the clandestine build-up of, by now, almost operational missiles in Cuba " a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country if our courage and our commitments are ever to be trusted again by either firend or foe."[2] True to our word and ready, as always, to pay "the high cost of freedom," Kennedy outlined the blockade plan and assorted threats and diplomatic accompaniments as United States policy. Kennedy then invited Khrushchev to join him in seeking historic arms control but archaically attributed all desire for world domination to his opponent, putting all the blame for the current Cuban situation and all the initiative for getting out of it onto Khrushchev:

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 739.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 793.

XUM

> I call upon Chairman Khrushchev to eliminate this clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations. I call him further to abandon this course of world domination and to join us in an historic effort to end the perilous arms race and to transform the history of man. He has an opportunity to move the world back from the abyss of destruction.[1]

Eschewing the unnecessary risk of a world-wide nuclear war which would turn victory into ashes in our mouths, Kennedy concluded--with some historic recognition of a transcendent perspective and power more universal than his own but still with the basically archaic assumption that right was on our side and consisted of "peace" and "freedom"--with the assertion that he sought "not the victory of might but the vindication of right, and, God willing, the attainment of peace and freedom around the world."[2]

There was a sense of ultimacy about the situation, a sense of the abyss. The world was witnessing its first real crisis of the nuclear age. "We are in as grave a crisis as mankind has been in," said Dean Rusk, one which causes each nation "to look deeply at its own fundamental commitments."[3] In some parts of the United States, people stocked up on canned goods and dug out bomb shelters. Some city-dwellers evacuated. In some Los Angeles high schools, students broke down and sobbed, "I don't want to die."[4] In Britain, the Tribune wrote that Kennedy was "risking blowing the world to hell." In Buenos Aires, Billy Graham preached to ten thousand people on "The End of the World."[5] But there was little panic and much support for the President, with favorable telegrams to the White House outstripping negative ones ten to one.[6] People had been taught to think the unthinkable, to take the spectre of all-out nuclear war in stride, were attuned to crises and inured to them, had been close to an ultimate confrontation over Berlin under Kennedy and had survived, trusted their President.[1] Most people recognized the futility of individual action and watched with breathless fascination the dual between the two greatest superpowers and the two lonely men who headed them.[2] There was nothing to do but wait.

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[1] Elie Abel, The Missile Crisis (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 106.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 794. [3] Abel, Missile Crisis, p. 108.

[4] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 317.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 747, 749.

[6] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 797; Halberstam, "An Eerie Moment," p. 3.

As Monday slowly gave way to Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday, it appeared that the American strategy was working. Soviet cargo ships carrying permissable cargo were let through the blockade and others did not attempt to run it, thus precluding further supplies for the missile build-up though not preventing completion of the process of operationalizing the missiles from supplies already on the island, which was becoming an imminent danger. Then Friday night in a secret letter from Khrushchev to Kennedy, supplemented by unofficial conversations between A.B.C. correspondent John Scali and Soviet official Aleksander Fomin, the suggestion was made that the Soviet Union remove its missiles from Cuba under United Nations inspection in exchange for an American no-invasion pledge (which was the substance of Stevenson's first deimplomatic proposal). Khrushchev's tone in the letter was conciliatory, acknowledging mistakes on both sides with historic equanimity. Khrushchev explained that he was of sound mind and had sent missiles to Cuba not for offensive purposes but to prevent another American invasion of it. He appealed to Kennedy to rise above petty passions and to step back from a war that could not be stopped once started but would escalate on its own momentum. Rather than each continuing to pull on the rope of antagonism until its knot would be so tight that it would have to be cut by nuclear war, Khrushchev asked Kennedy to join him in taking measures to untie the knot.[1] Kennedy was ready to accept.

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 313.

[2] Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 211.

But on Saturday morning things looked darker. Radio Moscow broadcast a new note from the foreign ministry offering to trade Russian missiles in Cuba for American missiles in Turkey. A U-2 plane was shot down over Cuba and another U-2 strayed over the Soviet Union. A Soviet ship was heading for the interception line. In this situation, Adlai Stevenson advised accepting the proposed trade-off (which he had not previously included in his diplomatic arsenal because it was irrelevant to Cuba and diversionary). Kennedy agreed that the Turkish missiles were obsolete and was peeved that they had not been removed as ordered some time ago, but he did not think it would look good to remove them now and he refused to negotiate under the gun. Bobby Kennedy criticized Stevenson for not being tough enough and for almost blowing their consensus, but John Kennedy commended his courage in presenting the diplomatic point of view, which was his job, though he later instructed hand-picked journalists to write that Adlai wanted a Munich.[1] Rejecting the swap, an impersonal White House statement issued at 4:30 P.M. dismissed the question of our Turkish missiles as irrelevant to the present crisis but indicated they would be no problem in subsequent negotiations for arms control. At 8:00 P.M., Kennedy sent a secret letter to Khrushchev, ignoring the Saturday broadcast proposal for a missile trade and responding favorably to the secret Friday letter. Robert Kennedy delivered the letter to Ambassador Dobrynin with the threat of "strong and overwhelming retaliatory action unless the President received immediate notice that the missiles would be withdrawn."[1] Twenty-four Air Force Reserve troop carrier squadrons were called up. More than a thousand pickets mustered in front of the White House, some pleading for peace, some for war.[2] As the crisis deepened, Americans lifted their eyes anxiously to the White House, hoping for deliverance, hearts faltering and then growing stronger, trusting their leader to guide them once again safely through the storm.[3] "No one could discern what lay beyond," wrote Schlesinger, "what measures and countermeasures, actions and reactions, might have driven the hapless world to the ghastly consummation. . . . Saturday night was almost the blackest of all."[4]

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[1] A.B.C., "Missiles of October;" Halberstam, "An Eerie Moment," p. 3.

On Sunday morning, the storm cleared and the light dawned. A new letter was broadcast from Khrushchev accepting Kennedy's terms and, in the cause of peace, ordering the missiles ("arms which you describe as offensive") to be dismantled. The news caused much relief and rejoicing. When Kennedy appeared at the Executive Committee meeting, all stood up, and some made remarks to the effect that now that he was "ten feet tall" Kennedy's international stature and influence would increase.[5] Kennedy was seen as a different man, now worthy of the trust placed in him by his fellow Americans, and approval for what he had done was almost universal.[6] As usual, a foreign crisis strengthened the Administration in office as the Democrats gained four seats in the Senate and lost two seats in the House, reversing the customary marked loss of congressional seats by the party with presidential power at midterm elections. "Kennedy emerged in the West," said The New York Times, "as the hero of the crisis."[1] Embroidering the popular imagination with an apt cosmocratic theme, Klapp comments, "Like Perseus arriving to face the dragon or Achilles girding himself to do battle for the Greeks, the dragon backed off and withdrew his missiles, giving dramatic victory to the hero."[2]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 806. [2] Ibid.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 311.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 759, 758.

[5] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 808.

[6] Halberstam, "An Eerie Moment," p. 3.

Kennedy was also seen as a modernistic master who had negotiated with patience and skill.[3] Neustadt saw him as a pioneer in the handling of nuclear confrontations, who--in his reach for information and control, his balance of firmness with caution, his sense of limits, his concern for the psychology of his opponent and insistence on limited objectives rather than high risks and unattainable "victory"--had displayed and dramatized what a President must do to minimize the risk of war through miscalculation.[4] And Schlesinger sees Kennedy demonstrating a balance between archaic toughness and modernistic calculation with historic ideals to boot:

> The ultimate impact of the missile crisis was wider than Cuba, wider even than the Western hemisphere. To the whole world it displayed the ripening of an American leadership unsurpassed in the responsible management of power. From the moment of challenge, the American President never had a doubt about the need for a hard response. But throughout the crisis he coolly and exactly measured the level of force necessary to deal with the level of threat. Defining a clear and limited objective, he moved with mathematical precision to accomplish it. At every stage he gave his adversary time for reflection and reappraisal, taking care not to force him into "spasm reactions" or to cut off his retreat. . . . It was this combination of toughness and restraint, of will, nerve, and wisdom, so brilliantly controlled, so matchlessly calibrated, that dazzled the world.
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> Moreover, despite strong pressure to take action repugnant to our national traditions, he always linked his use of power to the ideals of the country and the necessities of the world which would

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[1] The New York Times, October 30, 1962 cited by Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 81.

[2] Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, p. 81.

[3] Halberstam notes this then-prevalent view; "An Eerie Moment," p. 3.

[4] Neustadt, Presidential Power, pp. 203, 210.

> have to go on after the conflict. By his own composure, clarity, and control, he held the country behind him. It was almost as if he had begun to reshape the nation in his own image, for the American people, so many of whom had been in a frenzy about air raid shelters a year before, so many of whom still longed for total solutions, went through Cuba week without panic or hysteria, with few cries of "better red than dead" and fewer demands (until the crisis was safely over) for "total victory."[1]

Kennedy himself was more relieved than exultant. Having presided over a crisis of similar magnitude to that over which Lincoln presided, in the view of some, Kennedy wryly remarked when the crisis had passed, "This is the night to go to the theatre."[2] Kennedy did not put himself forward as a master international statesman. He was reticent to talk about the lessons of Cuba, except to underscore the continuing danger of poor communication and miscalculation. He figured that American toughness had prevailed because the Soviet Union was clearly wrong and did not have vital interests at stake, factors which could not be simply relied upon in future conflicts.[3] If not a modern master, much less did Kennedy welcome being an archaic hero this time. He tried to discourage popular demonology, refusing to cast himself as a gloating victorious hero or Khrushchev as a humiliated defeated villain. Rejecting a dramatic television appearance, Kennedy released a White House statement and letter to Khrushchev accepting his terms and in a few unadorned words on national television commended Khrushchev for his "statesmanlike decision" and made an appeal for arms control.[4] Kennedy said the adulation would wear off in about a week and that, if he would capitalize on his new stature, it would be to underplay it in the interest of a reduction in international tensions.[5]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 767-768.

[2] Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 224.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 759.

[4] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 809; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 759.

[5] Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 224; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 808.

Having proved his strength to his own and the Russians' satisfaction and finding the agony more than the ecstasy, Kennedy was now able to move toward detente.[1] Having been all the way to the brink of nuclear war, Kennedy had a change of heart, Schlesinger tells us:

> Kennedy's own feeling underwent a qualitative change after Cuba: a world of nations threatening each other with nuclear weapons now seemed to him not just an irrational but an intolerable and impossible world. Cuba thus made vivid the sense that all humanity had a common interest in the prevention of nuclear war--an interest far above those national and ideological interests which had once seemed ultimate.[2]

Corresponding with the change in Kennedy was a change in world mood, a weariness with the Cold War that Kennedy had earlier helped to revive and a new sense of hope which was also associated with Kennedy. British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan said before the House of Commons that the Cuban missile crisis represented one of the great turning points of history and later remarked that Kennedy had earned his place in history by his management of it.[3] In a toast to Chancellor Adenauer two weeks afterwards, Kennedy himself spoke of the crisis as "an important turning point, possibly, in the history of the relations between East and West."[4] A European political leader told Sorensen that Kennedy's stand in the Cuban missile crisis might be not only a turning point in history but the start of a true Golden Age.[5] With China rising in the wings and other unforeseen changes in the world reducing the dominance and conflict of the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, having survived the first potentially lethal confrontation in the nuclear age, were ready, as never before, to reconsider the path of peace in a new light.

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[1] Halberstam, "An Eerie Moment," p. 3.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 815.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 810, 808.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 678.

[5] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 840.

Twelve years later, approval of Kennedy's handling of the Cuban missile crisis is not so complete, in part, because the ensuing thaw has spurred criticism of it. "In retrospect," Halberstam asserts, "the tensions seem particularly irrational and tragic: as if two blind dinosaurs were struggling in a tiny pit, each thinking that it was being defensive and that the other was the aggressor."[1] For many, Khrushchev now appears to have been the champion of rationality, sensing the "tightening rope" and the "smell of burning" and saving the world from nuclear holocaust by not challenging the American ultimatum,[2] while Kennedy is seen as having engaged in "an irresponsible exercise of great power," not really believing that the quarantine alone would accomplish Soviet withdrawal but willing "to burn the world to a cinder" if the Russians had not backed down.[3] "Had too much been risked over too little?" we now ask, noting again the lack of real danger in the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba and the great weight accorded appearances. Lessard comments:

> The tendency to think of policy in terms of prestige, to allow considerations of appearance to influence the course of decisions, was a serious flaw. The worst thing about the prestige game is that success and failure, right and wrong, are contingent not upon whether something works or not but upon whether it appears to work. The gravity of confrontations is dependent upon symbolism, on affronts to prestige, not real threats.[4]

If a modern Realpolitik was largely absent from deliberations, so too were historic moral values, except for Robert Kennedy's moral objection to an air strike, which only countered the worst possibilities and did not change the basic frame in which deliberation took place, which was archaic and agonistic. In thanking John Scali for his part in the negotiations, Dean Rusk said, "Remember . . . that eyeball to eyeball, they blinked first."[1] The Cuban missile crisis represents the ultimate in brinksmanship, but, as a false ultimate, the archaic ideology which spawned it was exposed as illogical by being pushed to its logical conclusion, resulting in Kennedy's being less eager to play Cosmocrator thereafter.

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[1] Halberstam, "An Eerie Moment," p. 3.

[2] A move which may have expedited his fall from power in 1964, ibid. In a December 12 speech to the Supreme Soviety Khrushchev said: "Which side tirumphed, who won? In this respect one may say that it was sanity, the cause of peace, and the security of peoples that won;" Abel, Missile Crisis, p. 191.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 311; Cater, "Do-It-Yourself Presidential Power," p. 219.

[4] Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead?" pp. 12-13.

V

The denouement of the Cuban missile crisis intensified Kennedy's quest for a nuclear test ban treaty. While not a crisis like the others, the procurement of a test ban treaty was another dramatic episode in the Kennedy series--the Matterhorn of his career in Theodore White's view,[2] a bold step toward that about which he cared most, the reduction of the likelihood of nuclear catastrophe.[3]

Kennedy did not always care that much about peace though he spoke a good deal about it. Kennedy called for arms control in his Inaugural Address, as we noted, and in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 1961, he announced that "mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind." Depicting a "nuclear sword of Damocles hanging over every man, woman, and child, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or madness," Kennedy warned his audience:

> We in this hall shall be remembered either as part of the generation that turned this planet into a flaming funeral pyre of the generation that met its vow to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. . . . Together we shall save our planet or together

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[1] Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 219.

[2] White, Making President 1964, p. 36.

[3] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 200.

> we shall perish in its flames. Save it we can--and save it we must--and then shall we earn the eternal thanks of mankind and, as peacemakers, the eternal blessings of God.[1]

Despite his rhetoric, however, Kennedy lacked an historic commitment to peace. "His initial interest in disarmament was largely for propoganda reasons," admits Sorensen,[2] and Kennedy's ringing words about peace took place in the midst of an archaic contest with Khrushchev over who whould conduct the most nuclear bomb tests. On August 30, 1961, the Soviet Union had broken the informal moratorium on nuclear testing--despite American and British pleas--which had been in effect since 1958, perhaps to make up for backing down on the promised signing of a peace treaty with East Germany.[3] On September 5, Kennedy followed suit by announcing American preparations for tests in the laboratory and underground--with no fallout.[4] Although Kennedy had said he would not resume nuclear tests for political or psychological reasons, it is clear that the "necessity" for resumption was entirely in the realm of appearances. In response to Stevenson's questions, Kennedy justified his decision to resume tests in pugnacious little-boy fashion:

> What choice did we have? They spit in our eye three times. We couldn't possibly sit back and do nothing at all. We had to do this. . . . The Russians made two tests _after_ our note calling for a ban on atmospheric testing. Maybe they couldn't have stopped the first, but they could have stopped the second. . . . All this makes Khrushchev look pretty tough. He has had a succession of apparent victories--space, Cuba, the thirteenth of August (the Berlin Wall) though I don't myself regard this as a Soviet victory. He wants to give out the feeling that he has us on the run. The third test was a contemptuous response to our note. . . . Anyway, the decision has been made. I'm not saying it was the right decision. Who the hell knows? But it is the decision which has been taken.[5]

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[1] David, _Kennedy Reader_, p. 398.

[2] Sorensen, _Kennedy_, p. 583.

[3] See #2, above.

[4] Schlesinger, _A Thousand Days_, pp. 426, 445.

[5] _Ibid_., p. 446.

XUM

Kennedy continued to resist pressures to resume atmospheric testing, but when the massive Russian testing program was topped off with a fifty-megaton explosion on October 30, Kennedy publically announced on November 2 that preparations were underway for American atmospheric tests in case it became necessary to conduct them. The following spring, on March 2, 1962, Kennedy announced ina televized address that the United States would resume minimum-fallout atmospheric tests in April unless the Soviet Union agreed to a test ban treaty before then. Kennedy claimed that his decision to test might strengthen the prospects for peace by removing the advantage accrued to the Russians by their testing alone and thereby making a test ban as useful to them as to us. Kennedy promised that concrete plans for a major breakthrough to peace would be offered at the Geneva disarmament conference, hoping and praying that the monumental step toward peace, which a test ban agreement would represent, would take the place of the tests he had announced.[1] Khrushchev declined the offer. On April 25, a new round of United States atmospheric nuclear tests began.

Then in October 1962 came the Cuban missile crisis, and thereafter Kennedy, having gone through his own "great turning,"[2] saw the need for disarmament differently, undergoing, as Sorensen puts it, "a degree of redemption on the subject:"

> Kennedy increasingly realized that there was no ultimate security in armaments, that tensions and danger were rising even as our nuclear stockpiles rose. Gradually and still skeptically he began to believe that disarmament was really achievable, that the money he was putting into the arms race could someday go into health and education.[3]

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[1] David, Kennedy Reader, pp. 262-263.

[2] See #4, above.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 583.

From then on, Kennedy pursued the test ban treaty with intense personal commitment.[1] Abetted by Khrushchev and Pope John, the real Kennedy of the Inaugural Address, Kateb claims, emerged out of the Cuban missile crisis, overriding his advisors to obtain a test ban treaty.[2]

In his commencement address at American University on June 10, 1963, Kennedy again reiterated the need for a test ban, announced that Khrushchev had agreed to talks with the United States and Britain on the subject, and declared that the United States would never start a war and would not be the first to resume nuclear tests in the atmosphere.[3] He put forth the test ban as a first step in a comprehensive strategy for peace for all men and for all time, a genuine peace that makes life on earth worth living, a modern practical peace that encompasses rather than eliminates conflict in a diverse and tolerant world.[4] American reaction was muted. The American press underplayed the speech, and the letters to the White House about it, though largely favorable, numbered only 896 (out of the over 50,000 letters received that week).[5] Internationally, however, the speech was hailed. England's Manchester Guardian called the speech "one of the great state papers of American history." Sensing, perhaps, that it was the first Presidential speech in eighteen years to succeed in going beyond the Cold War, Khrushchev called it "the best speech by any President since Roosevelt."[6] It was the signal Khrushchev had been waiting for, and he let the speech be published in full in the Soviet press and did not jam its radio broadcast into the Soviet Union. Equally suddenly, Russia agreed to the principle of inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency and heightened the prospects for a nuclear test ban.[1]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 830.

[2] Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 60. I would suggest a better Kennedy than the predominant one in the Inaugural Address; see Ch. II, #3.

[3] David, Kennedy Reader, p. 128. [4] Ibid., pp. 121-130; see Ch. V, #4.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 831. The test ban was popular on Kennedy's subsequent Western campaign trip; ibid, p. 894.

[6] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 822, 825.

On June 23, President Kennedy traveled to Europe to reassure our allies, and especially Germany, that American disarmament negotiations with the Soviet Union would not endanger them. In West Berlin, which had warmly welcomed Robert Kennedy after the Berlin crisis of 1961, Kennedy received a most overwhelming reception. Says Schlesinger: "Three fifths of the population of West Berlin streamed into the streets, clapping, waving, crying, cheering, as if it were the second coming." At the culmination of his "triumphal journey,"[2] the crowd hysterically rose and roared like an animal as Kennedy's speech reached its concluding crescendo: "All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore as a free man, I take pride in the words 'Ich bin ein Berliner.'"[3]

Throughout Europe, anti-Americanism gave way to rising confidence in Kennedy.[4] Using his old campaign techniques, including advance men, motorcades, outdoor rallies, local humor, and maximum television coverage, Kennedy talked over the heads of government into the hearts of the people, especially the younger generation.[5] Kennedy's youthful vitality contrasted with the weary pessimism of most older leaders, his pragmatism with their nationalism, his dreams of a Europe of democracy and freedom with their patterns of established authoritarianism.[1] USIA surveys in Western Europe showed a rise in approval of American foreign policy,even in France, reaching its zenith in the eight years the polls had been taken.[2] In the summer of 1963, Schlesinger claims, John F. Kennedy could have carried every country in Europe.[3] And the receptivity of Europe, and especially of Germany, gave him, as he had hoped, the 'political capital' that he could draw on in negotiating the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty over Bonn's misgivings.[4]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 826.

[2] "Second coming" and "triumphal journey" are obvious analogies to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and to his expected return in glory. To many in the crowd who cheered Jesus, he, too, was a political hero, the messianic king who had come to restore the nation. Like Jesus also, Kennedy's moment of triumph was prelude to a violent and ignominious death which enshrined rather than erased the triumph. For Kennedy as another Christ, see Chapter VIII, #6, below.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 808-809. [4] Ibid., pp. 805-806.

[5] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 652-653.

On July 2, Khrushchev endorsed a test ban treaty in a speech in East Berlin. On July 25, 1963, the Treaty was initialed in Moscow, and,, the following night, Kennedy hailed it as "a shaft of light cut into the darkness" and a "victory for mankind," repeating his favorite Chinese proverb that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. On September 20, Kennedy, in a speech to the U.N., called upon that body to preserve the gains already made, saying, "Let us complete what we have started, for no man who puts his hands to the plow and looks back, as the Scriptures tell us, is fit for the Kingdom of God."[5] He proposed further areas of agreement and upheld a peace lying in the hearts and minds of the people.[6]

Peace seemed to be, indeed, in the minds of the American people.

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 653; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 33, 806.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 654.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 811.

[4] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 131.

[5] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 720.

[6] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 837-838.

"The absense of major criticism, whether in Congress or the press," writes Schlesinger, "showed the transformation which, despite Berlin and despite Cuba, the President wrought in the mind of the nation."[1] Public opinion polls indicated a marked swing in favor of the test ban treaty--mounting to 80 per cent by September. On September 24, the Senate gave its consent to the ratification of the treaty by a vote of 80-19. The action, Kennedy said, was a "welcome culmination of this effort to lead the world once again into the path of peace."[2]

In his efforts toward a test ban treaty, Kennedy finally overcame the archaic frame in which he had conducted previous crises and previous bomb tests, turning aside from the Cosmocrator role toward another way to create order. The test ban treaty was an historic accomplishment backed by more Biblical language than usual, perhaps even influenced, if Kateb is correct, by Pope John XXIII's encyclical "Pacem in Terris," which Kennedy said he was proud of as a Catholic and had learned from as an American.[3] The peace Kennedy sought was predominantly modern, as we noted,[4] and a test ban treaty was surely a dramatic step toward it; even if it meant little alone without other less dramatic steps toward peace--it was, after all, no more than a formalization of the moratorium on nuclear testing which had been quietly worked out in the latter Eisenhower years before Kennedy began his era of crises)--it was at least a notable foray into into greatly underutilized modern field of diplomacy. There was a continuing archaic element in Kennedy's media-oriented "campaign" in Europe, including the celebration of "freedom" in West Berlin, and thus a substitution of popular leadership for diplomatic work--which his henchmen could

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 834. [2] Ibid.

[3] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 250.

[4] See Chapter V, #4, above.

could well have done while he was needed at home[1]--but at least the archaism was used this time in the pursuit of the historic and modern goal of peace.

VI

Kennedy's "breakthroughs" in peace and in civil rights were almost simultaneous. On June 10, 1963, he delivered his American University commencement address on peace, signaling his readiness to complete the test ban treaty negotiations, and on June 11, he gave his first major speech on civil rights, beginning a new initiative in that area, followed a week later by the submission of his civil rights bill to Congress (just before his European trip on behalf of the test ban treaty) and climaxed in August by the March on Washington. Though Kennedy's bill never passed during his lifetime and he surely did not move until he had to,[2] Kennedy is remembered as a civil rights champion. "Tardily but effectively," Kennedy violated his cautious pragmatism and made the civil rights movement a "moral crusade,"[3] trying with "tardy haste"--which was his characteristic style as Cosmocrator--to prove equal opportunity and citizenship for the Negro before pent-up frustration boiled over.[4]

As usual, Kennedy gave promise of bold leadership in civil rights during his presidential campaign. In a Los Angeles speech, he said:

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[1] Fairlie comments: "In 1963, Kennedy made a prolonged visit to the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, although there was little to be accomplished by meetings with their leaders, at a time when the struggle for civil rights was breaking into open violence. This was always his manner;" Kennedy Promise, p. 99. Fairlie is undoubtedly correct about Kennedy's predilection for foreign affairs and his use of pre-occupation there to avoid following through on domestic issues like civil rights--though he should give Kennedy some credit for the test ban.

[2] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 201.

[3] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 70.

[4] Cater, "Do-It-Yourself Presidential Power," p. 220.

> When our next President takes office in January, he must be prepared to move forward in the field of human rights in three general areas: as a legislative leader, as chief executive, and as the center of the moral power of the United States. . . . As a moral leader, the next President must play his role in interpreting the great moral and educational forces which are involved in our crusade for human rights. He must exert the great moral and educational force of his office to help bring equal access to public facilities from churches to lunch counters, and support the right of every American to stand up for his rights, even if on occasion he must sit down for them. Only the President, not the Senate and not the House and not the Supreme Court, in any real sense, only the President can create the understanding and tolerance necessary as the spokesman for all the American people, as the symbol of the moral imperative upon which any free society is based.[1]

Kennedy even told a New York audience that he hoped to win the Democratic nomination without a single Southern vote, but the fact is that Kennedy said enough about civil rights to court the Negro and white liberal vote but not enough to alienate the Southern white vote; he would not have won the 1960 election without the South nor without the Negro vote, which was especially pivotal in Illinois and Michigan--he won both. In fact, Kennedy won 85 per cent of the Negro vote. An important factor was his telephone call to Mrs. King while Martin Luther King was in jail. This was the kind of dramatic gesture at which Kennedy was so adept; it was worth a pile of issue papers in attracting support without being pointed enough to alienate Southern white voters (though Nixon figured it was too risky and declined to aid King's rèlease from jail).[2]

When they took their oaths of office, neither the President nor Bobby Kennedy, the Attorney General, were fully aware of the enormity of racial wrongs.[3] Nor were they aware of the strength of the civil rights movement or of the way it would elicit a stronger commitment ffom them.

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[1] Harry Golden, Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1964), p. 125.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 67; Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, pp. 20-21.

[3] Ibid., p. 139.

Murray Kempton comments:

> Kennedy over-valued what was Eastern and fashionable. The real history of the United States was made by completely unexpected people. The best example of this, of course, were the Negro kids in those segregated Negro schools who went and sat down at a lunch counter and got themselves in gaol. They altered the Democratic platform by this particular act, and then went on really to alter the whole climate of discussion. So that you had a period of ten years of conferences of one kind or another by comfortable and respectable people, and then you had one year of these direct-action demonstrations, followed by a kind of engagement with the problem. And this proved to me where ideas came from. They came from unknown strangers.[1]

Kennedy had no gut feeling for the Negro cause and was not sympathetic to it as a movement from below with sharp interests of its own but sought always to curb and contain it to keep it within his "elite consensus" imposed from above.[2] But Kennedy found he could not control the movement and ended up instead, in some sense, leading it. He helped to guide its torrential currents and placed himself, under pressure but not forced, at the head of the revolution, according to Sorensen, lending it a dignity and a moral dimension as only a President can.[3] Whether Kennedy "tried to keep at all times at least one step ahead of evolving pressure," as his apologists claim,[4] or was always several steps behind, as his detractors contend,[5] it is clear, as Kennedy himself readily admitted, that he was controlled by events.[6] Kennedy discouraged liberal criticism of his civil rights position, especially as it might suggest that he was deficient in moral energy, but he exhibited, as Martin Luther King said after Kennedy's death, "the ability to respond to creative pressure." According

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[1] Murray Kempton cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 119.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 249-256.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 170.

[4] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 555.

[5] E.g., Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 249-251.

[6] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 124.

XUM

to King, "Kennedy frankly acknowledged that he was responding to mass demands and did so because he thought it was right to do so. This is the secret of the deep affection he evoked. He was responsive, sensitive, humble before the people, and bold on their behalf."[1]

Kengedy was far from bold at first as King made clear at the time.[2] Civil rights was merely domestic and not one of his issues. Keeping his cards close to his vest and taking few risks, Kennedy played politics with the race issue--but it was a "moral politics" he played, Harry Golden claims. Pragmatist that he was, Kennedy bided his time until he felt the race issue was politically ripe. Indeed, his skill as a politician is one of his claims to greatness; if he had refused to use his political skills and charged off on moral issue, Kennedy would have doomed his administration to failure, Golden asserts[3]--though it is hard to see how losing is more of a failure than failing to try.[4] Kennedy did not pose as America's conscience but waited until its conscience was aroused before he addressed it. The conscience of America was at last stirred by events in Birmingham, and then, with well-timed speeches, Kennedy inspired a moral tone that washed over the country.[5] Until then, Kennedy held back, biding his time, maintaining unity through lack of controversial action and using civil rights mainly for propoganda purposes.

Kennedy refused either to initiate or to support civil rights legislation, saying that he did not want to alienate in a losing cause the

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[1] Martin Luther King cited by Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 891.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 250.

[3] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, pp. 18, 24, 119.

[4] See Chapter V, #3. Traditional Christian ethics acknowledges both sins of commission and sins of imission.

[5] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 550; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 662; Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 128.

Southern votes he needed for education and minimum wage bills, which would also benefit the Negro.[1] His initial strategy was confined to symbolic moves and executive actions. He included singer Marian Anderson in his inaugural ceremony, refused to speak to segregated audiences or to belong to segregated clubs, hosted a thousand Negro leaders at a reception held on Lincoln's birthday, recruited more blacks for the Coast Guard, proposed Robert Weaver, HHFA head, to be the Secretary of the proposed new Cabinet-level Department of Urban Affairs and Housing,[2] and appointed more blacks than ever to top government positions, e.g., increasing the number of b black lawyers employed by the federal government seven-fold.[3] Civil rights lawyers were increased from 5 to 24, augmented by college students in the summer. From 42-58 civil rights cases were prepared, especially in the area of voting rights, and over 36 of them were won--in contrast to 10 cases begun in the Eisenhower years. Using the weak Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 and going the last mile with Southern officials, it was a tremendous job to prepare the cases, but because of this effort and because of a greater degree of responsiveness by the federal government to reprisals, Negroes registered in unprecedented numbers, e.g., making up 40 per cent of the vote in a Macon County, Alabama election.[4]

Besides this prodigious effort spearheaded by Robert Kennedy and the Justice Department, Kennedy also took executive action in employment and housing. On March 6, 1961, an executive order created a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity providing for sanctions and penalties against discrimination in plants filling government contracts and supplemented by "plans for progress" in other firms. Seventeen hundred complaints were received during the first two years of the Kennedy administration with favorable action on 72 per cent of them. Though Kennedy had promised it during his presidential campaign and used it as bait to keep civil rights leaders from criticizing his legislative inaction, he kept delaying the signing of an executive order on housing in order to retain Southern support for his trade bill. An "Ink for Jack" campaign was begun as the delay lengthened, with people across the country sending bottles of ink to the White House so that Kennedy could make his promised "stroke of the pen." Finally, just safely beyohd the mid-term elections in November 1962, Kennedy issued a watered-down executive order banning discrimination in housing built or financed by the federal government in the future.[1]

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 249-250; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 849. For Kennedy's failure to work for the aid-to-education bill as well, see Chapter V, #3.

[2] Since the new agency proposal was defeated in Congress, some charged hypocrisy in intending to appoint a Negro to a non-existent post; others charged that Kennedy sabotaged the agency by proposing a Negro head.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 536, 531; Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 114.

[4] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, pp. 104-105, 22; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 854; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 538.

In another kind of executive action, Kennedy engaged, as Cosmocrator, in a series of dramatic confrontations with Southern governors. Sending federal marshalls to protect Freedom Riders desegregating buses in 1961 was the first skirmish since Little Rock in 1958. Marshalls and even federal troops were sent to insure James Meredith's safe admission into the University of Mississippi in September 1962. Racial violence and gubernatorial defiance again came to the fore in Alabama in May 1963. On May 4, Sheriff "Bull" Connor turned fire hoses and released growling police dogs onto Negro demonstrators. Since no federal law or court was being flaunted, Kennedy could do nothing about it officially. But this incident in Birmingham, made vivid by front-page newspaper photographs, aroused the outrage and conscience of the world. With presidential encouragement, white businessmen and Negro leaders worked out agreements on May 10. But Governor Wallace refused to be a party to any "compromise on the issue of segregation" and so did the populace. Bombing and rioting took over, and the President sent three thousand troops into Alabama and made a strong warning on television. On June 11, Governor Wallace appeared in the doorway of the state college at Tuscaloosa to read a proclamation nullifying the President's proclamation upholding the court-ordered admission of two Negro students, but Wallace made no objection when the two were taken to their dormitories. Kennedy avoided having Wallace pushed aside or arrested, which would have given him the martyrdom he sought, but, in order to squelch further resistance, Kennedy promptly federalized a readied national guard; Wallace then backed off, and the students were registered without incident.[1]

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[1] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 118; Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 251; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 542.

Finally, Kennedy noticed that more than separate incidents and villains were involved, that the racial problem would not go away by soft-pedaling it, that civil rights agitation would not be contained by pallid amelioration, and that the official violence which it provoked had aroused public opinion; he forthwith decided to take moral and legislative initiatives to root out the systematic racism which lay behind both the nonviolent civil rights attack upon it and the violent official counterattack. On June 11, touching first on the events that day in Tuscaloosa, Kennedy gave a televized report on civil rights to the American people. Announcing that "we are confronted primarily with a moral issue, which is as old as the Scriptures and as clear as the American Constitution," Kennedy appealed to America's twin puritan and republican traditions, alluding both to the Golden Rule--"every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated"--and to the Declaration of Independence--"this nation was founded on the principle that all men are created equal." He called on the nation to fulfill its promise and to meet the moral crisis, not only in legislation but also in daily lives, and he indicated that he would ask Congress the following week to make a commitment, which it had not made fully in this century, that race has no place in American life or law. With Birmingham still fresh in their minds, the nation listened, and some Negro leaders hailed the address as a second "Emancipation Proclamation" and Kennedy as a second "Emancipator President."[1] Claims Golden:

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 551-554.

> Kennedy was the first President since Lincoln to declare publically that racial segregation and discrimination are morally indefensible. He was the first President to support the Negro's drive for equality by making public announcement that the security of our nation, its sacred honor, and its future were inseparable from its guarantee of civil rights.[2]

His June 11 address "fully committed for the first time," writes Sorensen, "the power and prestige of the American Presidency to the drive for black equality."[3]

Kennedy followed up his address by sending to Congress, a week later, the most comprehensive and far-reaching civil rights bill ever proposed.[4] Kennedy had sent a package of civil rights bills to Congress the previous February, accompanied by a speech extolling historic God-given rights, modernistically hailing law as the eternal safeguard of liberty (not to be disobeyed in "a government of laws not men), and even archaically putting forth action on civil rights as the appropriate sacrificial response for every individual who asks what he can do for his country.[1] But the speech attracted little attention in a then apathetic America, and the proposed legislation took a piecemeal approach to the problem which completely ignored its full moral dimension.[2] This time it was different. Included in the new bill were provisions for equal accomodations in public facilities, for the Attorney General to initiate school desegregation suits, for the establishment of a Community Relations Service, and for withholding funds from federal programs in which discrimination occurred.[3] The message accompanying the bill concluded with a plea for the people to look into their hearts, not for charity but for justice, stipulating on historic rather than modern grounds that, "in this year of the Emancipation Centennial, justice requires us to insure the blessings of liberty for all Americans and their posterity--not merely for reasons of economic efficiency, world diplomacy, and domestic tranquility--but above all because it is right."[4]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 557; Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 18.

[2] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. viii.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 170.

[4] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 558.

Not only to lobby for the civil rights bill but also to encourage a revolution in the status of the Negro throughout American life, Kennedy held an unprecedented series of White House meetings from May 29 to July 11. He met with 1600 national leaders, including governors, proprietors, labor leaders, educators, lawyers, civil rights leaders, women, businessmen, mayors, editors, and clergymen--certain that this last group would recognize the "conflict between racial bigotry and the Holy Word."[5]

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[1] David, Kennedy Reader, pp. 187-198.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 170; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 871.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 882.

[4] David, Kennedy Reader, p. 217.

[5] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 563-564; David, Kennedy Reader, p. 213.

However, Kennedy "had no more moral unanimity from the churches of America"—split down the middle, especially on a North-South axis, in support or condemnation of segregation—"than Abraham Lincoln had a hundred years before."[1] Like Lincoln, President Kennedy ended up being the nation's "chief moral authority" but sought to involve others through this series of meetings in changing the moral atmosphere of the country, so that the nation as a whole would work on its deep racial problems and not—in its usual "Prometheus complex"—just leave everything to the President, regarding him like a god who would bring fire from heaven and work wonders.[2]

On August 28, almost a quarter of a million people participated in a March on Washington. Although Kennedy first asked civil rights leaders to call off the march, had it toned down, and was instrumental in having the planned march finale shifted from the Capitol galleries to the Lincoln Memorial, he gave the march his blessing and "unofficial" help, offering almost a social invitation to it and calling it "a peaceful assembly for the redress of grievances which is in the great tradition" in a mid-July press conference.[3] A peaceful, dignified, awe-inspiring celebration, the march culminated in Martin Luther King's expression of his dream of a day of racial harmony when the glory of the Lord would be revealed. After greeting the march leaders with "I have a dream" and congratulating them, Kennedy, who wanted success in Congress and not just a big show at the Capitol, brought the civil rights leaders back to the purpose of the march in his meeting with them after—to support the civil

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[1] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 142. For an intriguing discussion of segregation as a religious heresy, see ibid., p. 149.

[2] Ibid, pp. 141, 216; Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 171; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 881.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 254-255; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 566. Presidents Roosevelt and Eisenhower had staved off previous attempts to have a Negro march on Washington; Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, pp. 19-20.

XUM

rights bill. He was intent, explain his apologists, on a legislative victory on a moral issue rather than a moral victory on a legislative issue.[1] Kennedy gave each man an assignment and advice on how to influence particular Congressmen and the constituents of their districts to back the bill.[2] A compromise civil rights bill was approved by the House Judiciary Committee on October 29 and reported out to the House with Kennedy's full backing on November 20.[3]

Kennedy knew that his strong stand for civil rights could cost him the next presidential election, but he had no intention of turning back.[4] Kennedy held and shared a vision of a new America to come into being before he left the White House: the racial question would be substantially alleviated and behind it, and a new South would emerge no longer dominated by racial politics though he himself might lose its support in the process.[5] It was not only for Negro advance but for this new America that he worked:

> Mr. Kennedy's significance in the Negro's advance was not so much that he helped him along as that he understood his revolution was important and that it must succeed, not only for the cause of justice for the Negro, but more important for the welfare of America. . . . Kennedy saw in the Negro a charismatic symbol of a renewed vitality of the American civilization.[6]

"The uprising of Negroes," Schlesinger adds to Golden, "contained the potentiality of ushering in a new era which would not only win Negroes their rights but renew the democratic commitment of the national community."[7] Kennedy symbolized that hoped-for transformation. "More than the man he was and the office he held," asserts Golden, "he was an Idea of what we could become, what we could be, what we could achieve."[1] Yet this time Kennedy was not simply annunciating and symbolizing the good but actively working for it at considerable political risk. Schlesinger observes:

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 559; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 884.

[2] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 121.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 888.

[4] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 98 (remark to A. Philip Randolph).

[5] Ibid., p. 24.

[6] Ibid., pp. 196, 130.

[7] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 891.

> Kennedy was doing at last what he had been reluctant to do before: putting the office of the Presidency on the line at the risk of defeat. He was staking his authority and his re-election on behalf of equal rights, the test ban, planned deficits in economic policy, doing so not without political apprehension but with absolute moral and intellectual resolve. As he anticipated, the civil rights fight in particular was biting into his popularity.[2]

Kennedy reported that his popularity had dipped below 50 per cent when speaking to civil rights leaders on June 22. An October Gallup poll showed him to have recovered some to a 62 per cent standing only to dip again slightly to 59 per cent in November. Nationwide polls showed a majority of white Americans in favor of the Kennedy bill but also feeling that he was pushing too fast. In the South, the picture was much bleaker. The decline in Kennedy's over-all popularity was mainly attributable to attrition of support in the South.[3] There ugly incidents continued, including the bombing of a black Birmingham Sunday school on September 15, and hatred for Kennedy reached desperate intensity even among children who wrote the President.[4] A Lubell poll on November 13 in a white workers' precinct in Birmingham which had given Kennedy a clear majority in 1960 found only one person who was still for Kennedy.[5] Negroes, of course, always loyal to Kennedy even when their leaders criticized him for inactivity, lauded Kennedy's active support, but they did not represent new votes. "By irreversibly insisting upon full equality for the Negro," Sorensen observes, "Kennedy knowingly cut himself off from the traditional Democratic source of electoral votes in the South without obtaining . . . offsetting gains elsewhere."[1] Yet Kennedy persisted. "Values were finally becoming more important to John Kennedy than votes," Sorensen avers. It was a long journey that Kennedy made to become a civil rights advocate:

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[1] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. viii.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 892.

[3] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 373, 394, 567; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 886, 892.

[4] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, p. 97.

[5] Ibid.; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 567.

> In 1953, John Kennedy was mildly and quietly in favor of civil rights legislation as a political necessity consistent with his moral instincts. In 1963, he was deeply and fervently committed to the cause of human rights as a moral necessity inconsistent with his political instincts.[2]

Kennedy's initial approach to civil rights had been colored by an archaic nationalism which viewed civil rights as unimportant and a possible distraction from the unity needed to pursue foreign policy goals and by an archaic egoism which feared losing and refused to risk spending political capital. Kennedy's first foray, the enforcement of existing civil rights laws in the South, upheld--with a degree of courage, persistence and novelty--the modern sanctity of federal law against the archaic sanctity of Southern custom, pursued also with a degree of historic moral fervor by Robert Kennedy.[3] Armed with a modern civil religion which gave a prime place to the law and with a law which embodied the rights of historic republican civil religion, the Kennedys attacked the rule of archaic sustom, social structure, psychic perception, and folk religion in the South.[4] Conflicts with Southern governors added an archaic dimension to the Kennedy side, upholding "not only the principle of equal rights and the sanctity of the law but also the paramount powers of the Presidency . . . and the majesty of the United States government"[1]--though direct cosmocratic confrontations between hero and dragon were avoided.[2] Finally, in his quest for civil rights legislation, historic civil religion came to the fore as the principles of both republican and puritan civil religion were set against the compromises through which both governmental and ecclesiastical institutions had undermined them, with the President emerging as a challenging and unifying moral force. At long last, Kennedy began to move away from an archaism which presupposed that the king knows best and all should disregard their particular interests to support his elite consensus toward a modern recognition of a world of irreconcilable interests, only partially malleable to his attempts to unify them--e.g., in support of his civil rights bill through his consensus-building series of summer meetings--and toward an historic commitment to values as more important than votes. A certain archaism persisted in Kennedy's continuing preference for sudden dramatic personal leadership rather than persistent conflictual political work and in his lobbying with the people rather than with the Congress, which may have retarded the passage of his civil rights bill, but at least the living Kennedy had given a dramatic push to the bill and enounced the historic principles behind it in a way that would be remembered and would contribute to its eventual passage after his death.[3]

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 171.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 528.

[3] Golden asserts that Robert Kennedy became "not the Attorney General who happened to be a Roman Catholic, but a New England Puritan who happened to be the Attorney General (Kennedy and Negroes, p. 22)," perhaps suggesting the predominance of puritan civil religion in his approach.

[4] Golden, Kennedy and Negroes, pp. 103, 115, 14, 35, 148.

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 542-543.

[2] Klapp, Symbolic Leaders, 84, 90; in a direct confrontation, the President might have been cast as Goliath against David. Cf. also Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 551: such a confrontation would demean presidential dignity and play into the hands of stunt-seeking governors.

[3] For the role of "posthumous obedience" in passage of the bill, see Chapter IX, #4.

VII

Despite Kennedy's partially outgrowing an archaic Cosmocrator role in his pursuit of a test ban treaty and a civil rights bill, the character of his continuing involvement in Vietnam indicates that he had not abandoned the role though he was getting nowhere with it there. Kennedy "no doubt realized that Viet Nam was his greatest failure in foeign policy," Sclesinger asserts,[1] and many today would share that realization. Even Kennedy's apologists admit the abortive character of Kennedy's Vietnam adventure, Neustadt calling America's involvement with Saigon "the most dubious thing that Kennedy left Johnson" and White speaking of it as Kennedy's "greatest substantive failure" rooted in his inability to grasp the politics of guerrilla warfare.[2]

At the time, however, Kennedy's lack of comprehension, mismanagement, and deception were hardly evident. The struggle in Viet Nam did not reach crisis proportions--and thus galvanize public attention--except perhaps fleetingly during President Diem's bloody repression of the Buddhist civil rights movement and his subsequent assassination, just before Kennedy's own death overshadowed these events. Pre-occupied with many other crises to which he accorded more importance--a Cosmocrator fights only one dragon at a time--Kennedy never gave Viet Nam his full attention, minimized public recognition of piecemeal increases in our involvement there, and made no mention of our campaign of clandestine warfare against North Vietnam.[3] "On every major aspect of the war, the Kennedy administration has sought to deceive the country," charged I. F. Stone in October 1963,[4] and in the New Republic, way back in June 1961, T.R.B. warned against the dire effect of lying to the public, undercutting democracy, and besmirching the American name which would be involved in "paramilitary counterinsurgency" (secret invasion), a prophecy which was only too clearly fulfilled when, five years later, the people of America discovered the extent of the deceptions of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the Vietnam war through the publication of The Pentagon Papers and the degree to which their faith in America as an upholder of historic values had been subverted.[1] Not only were the people deceived, but also the Congress—with whose advice and consent the President is supposed to conduct foreign policy and which alone has the constitutional authority to declare war—was hardly consulted and sketchily informed, especially about the more clandestine operations, as the American presidency moved well on its way to imperialization even during the Kennedy years.[2] Even within the Kennedy administration, pre-occupation with the larger question of whether to commit ground troops was so great that the decision to build up combat support and advisory missions was made "almost by default . . . without extended study or debate" or precise expectations of what it would achieve though a thorough review was slated for the fall of 1963.[3]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 909.

[2] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 209; White, Making President 1964, p. 41.

[3] Neil Sheehan et. al., The Pentagon Papers (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971), pp. 79, 82; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 910.

[4] I. F. Stone cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 4.

It is clear that Kennedy's involvement in Vietnam was more inadvertant than deliberate, that no irrevocable course had been set and options were still open, that Kennedy was less devoted to the Vietnam war than Johnson was later to be and more distracted by other crises from going all-out there.[4] While watching the French lose in Indochina in

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 206-207.

[2] Schlesinger, however, tends to minimize Kennedy's role in this process in The Imperial Presidency.

[3] Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 113. [4] Ibid., p. 114.

1954, Kennedy had given a speech about the futility of trying to defeat guerrillas who were indistinguishable from the populace with foreign conventional forces and had warned against dealing with the war as a military matter while ignoring the moral and ideological principles at the root of it. He bemoaned the overcommitment in Vietnam which he had inherited from Eisenhower. And he was increasingly aware that he had underrated the political dimension of the struggle in allowing his military advisors to define it as primarily a military matter.[1]

Yet that was characteristic of the Kennedy team. They were "ideological militarists moved by a hatred of Communism with no ethical content" who saw the world in military and strategic terms and consistently sought military solutions to diplomatic problems, admitting diplomacy only as a last resort (in contrast to the traditional dictum that "war is the last resort of diplomacy.")[2] After all, the Cosmocrator does not quietly negotiate with the dragon, he dramatically slays him; anything less would look weak. Kennedy was intent on winning, whatever the cost--"whatever helps win the war we support; whatever interferes with the war effort we oppose," he said at a September 1963 news conference not long before Diem's fall. The Kennedy men could not countenance the idea that "the Communists" could win here and there without the world coming to an end.[3] Kennedy gave credence to the idea that all of Southeast Asia would fall if Vietnam were "lost" (the "domino theory") and to the notion that it was our duty to hold back the advancing Communists, holding the line throggh "nation-building" and counterinsurgency.[4] Kennedy allowed the ideological aims of the war to justify its extension and to mask its futility. Anti-Communism was still very much alive with its archaic myth of the United States as Cosmocrator, extending the realm of salvation (called "freedom") against the hosts of evil--reaching its absurd extreme later in the remark of a commander who said he had to destroy a village in our to save it--and the skeptical Kennedy was not entirely free of its sway. Not a believer in holy war or total solutions himself, Kennedy, nonetheless, tended to underrate the nationalistic and anti-Chinese elements in the North Vietnamese revolutionary movement and to overrate the democratic elements in the South Vietnamese regime as he pictured the defense of freedom against Communism. However, under "military necessity"--which loomed so large in the absense of other considerations, e.g. historic values, modern interests--the United States could pull the rug out from under Diem and round up the people into "strategic hamlet" detentionscamps in order to "win the war" without even recognizing that we were abandoning the regime whose vaunted "democracy" justified American aid and enslaving the people for whose "freedom" we fought.[1]

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 302, 901.

[2] McDermott, "Crisis Managers," p. 4; Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 305.

[3] David Halberstam, "The Very Expensive Education of McGeorge Bundy," Harper's, July 1969, p. 21.

[4] Wicker, Kennedy Without Tears, pp. 186, 188; See Chapter V, #4.

Kennedy aimed to get out of Vietnam, but ended up getting deeper in. He saw no prospects for either easy extrication or easy victory; he saw no acceptable solution other than to weather out the nasty, untidy mess he was in, putting his hopes on a major counterguerilla effort utilizing a relatively small commitment of American manpower.[2] In so doing, Kennedy involved the United States in the dilemma, as The Pentagon Papers later put it, "of using only limited means to achieve excessive ends."[3] Either the ends had to be tailored or the means increased. As it happened, the means were increased, repeatedly, always with the illusion that one more shot in the arm would stay the enemy or turn the tide or attain the light at the end of the dark tunnel. At a cost of 69 Americans killed, the Kennedy years saw the number of American military "advisers" in Vietnam jump from an initial 685 men--the limit set by the Geneva accords--to 2,000 in 1961 to 16,732 by the time of Kennedy's death in 1963.[1] Kennedy thereby transformed the "limited-risk gamble" of the Eisenhower years into a "broad commitment."[2] Yet Kennedy resisted gross escalation. He vetoed the bombing of North Vietnam and refused to send ground troops to South Vietnam though he never formally ruled it out--thus making it difficult for pro-intervention advocates to charge him formally with weakness.[3]

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[1] Cf. McDermott, "Crisis Managers," p. 4.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 745.

[3] Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 79.

Much of Kennedy's Vietnam policy was motivated more by his political needs in America than by the welfare of the Vietnamese. Kennedy's top advisors were more divided over Vietnam strategy than over any other matter, especially on the issue of whether the Vietnamese struggle was primarily political or military. Kennedy personally leaned more toward the political interpretation and vetoed the more hawkish ideas for escalating the war, but he did not wish to alienate McNamara, who had justified his confidence in many other situations, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who could make trouble for him with their powerful friends in Congress if thwarted on this issue.[4] Kennedy was under a strong compulsion to make a show of strength.[5] Having accepted a negotiated settlement in Laos,

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy Legacy, p. 155; Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 81.

[2] Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 79.

[3] Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," p. 57.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 896; Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 508.

[5] Wicker, Kennedy Without Tears, p. 193.

Kennedy did not think he could politically afford a compromise in Vietnam--until, perhaps, his second term--lest he be charged with being soft on Communism. So Kennedy kept his options open and muddled through.

Believing that information could solve his dilemma, Kennedy kept sending men on fact-finding missions to Vietnam: Vice-President Johnson, McNamara three times, Rostow and Taylor, Krulak and Mendenhall. Kennedy was a little worried that all this official attention might commit American prestige to the war effort unduly. Yet he was always in search of that information, beyond the optimistic reports of the generals and of the Diem regime, which sould indicate what the situation really was and how it was developing in such a way that his advisors could agree on an interpretation and a strategy. Such information never materialized, and Kennedy continued to preside--without a clear position of his own and without taking sides--over his divided advisors. The military men he sent always said the war was going well, an appraisal which Kennedy echoed in his January 1963 State of the Union message, while the political men always said the political situation was bad. The disparity between the reports of General Krulak and diplomat Mendenhall was so great that the President jokingly asked them if they had visited the same country. It was not until Diem's repression of the Buddhists that the anti-democratic and corrupt character of the regime we were supporting became public, resulting in an erosion of support and a large cut in the foreign aid appropriation, and it was not until the fall of the Diem regime that both the terrible state of the war and the obviously worsening political situation were fully revealed.[1] Ironically, this realization led not to the abandonment of the Vietnam adventure but to a redoubling of efforts to redeem the seemingly hopeless situation. Diem's fall, The Pentagon Papers reveal,

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[1] Hilsman, To Move a Nation, pp. 521-522.

"inadvertantly increased United States involvement because our complicity in Diem's overthrow heightened our responsibilities and our commitment."[1]

At the end of the Kennedy regime, our involvement in Vietnam was increasing. Kennedy had received the final burst of intelligence for which he had been waiting, but he did not use it intelligently. If Kennedy had been operating in the modern frame of a Realpolitik, he would have bowed out of a bad situation in which our vital interests were not at stake. If he had been operating in an historic frame, he would have had to assess the justice of the aims and methods of the Vietnam war and to face the question of why he was abandoning the Diem regime if it was democratic or why he had supported it if it was not. Knowing what he did at the time of the fall of the Diem regime, only an archaic position would "consider defeat unthinkable" and resolve to intensify our involvement regardless of interests, values, or costs. After all, the hero in the archaic Cosmocrator myth--whether Beowulf or Apollo or Marduk or Indra--is always losing under tremendous odds just before his spectacular conquest of the chaos dragon.

In Vietnam as elsewhere, Kennedy's archaism was revealed in his quickness and toughness, but in Vietnam their inappropriateness was more apparent than usual. Kennedy's penchant for a spectacular swoop was thwarted in Vietnam because the dragon never showed up for the appointed battle. Kennedy's indecisiveness--which was characteristic but had been relieved by a showdown in the steel, Cuban missile, and civil rights crises when the challenged Kennedy had mustered all his strength to prove he was no coward[1]--became chronic in Vietnam because a showdown never came. "A danger of indefinite duration," said Eisenhower "calls for, not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis, but rather those which enable us to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint, the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle."[2] As the French had already proved, that was the name of the game in Indochina, but neither Kennedy nor the American people had the patience to play it. Vietnam was also frustrating because staying did not give Kennedy the opportunity to actually display his charscteristic toughness but withdrawal might have called it into question. With his tough image, Kennedy was obsessively afraid of himself or the United States appearing weak though our basic strength was never in doubt and hardly needed to be proved. Although his world was less divided into blocs and had more room for diversity in the Third World, Kennedy's tendency to invest every direct U.S.-U.S.S.R. problem with high passion and to create dramatic confrontations probably intensified the Cold War. With his "agonistic" conception of world politics, Kennedy regarded a contest of wills almost as an end in itself rather than as a means to a political end with pride being the prize as much as any substantive outcome. Kennedy never yielded, was never bested. Where pragmatic prudence did not lead him, pride--with its concern for appearances and fear of the impression of weakness--pushed him along, e.g., into the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion, into responding to missiles in Cuba when they posed no new military threat, into resuming nuclear tests when it was not necessary.[3] In Vietnam, substantive justification was especially lacking as

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[1] Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 158. In a secret cable, the U.S. had encouraged Vietnamese generals to get rid of Nhu (and, perhaps, Diem), had then pulled back from support of a coup, and later cut aid to Vietnam signaling to the plotting Vietnamese generals the previously agreed-upon green light for a coup; the U.S. was informed of the coup beforehand.

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[1] Cater, "Do-It-Yourself Presidential Power," p. 218.

[2] Eisenhower's farewell address cited by Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 107.

[3] Kateb, "Kennedy as Statesman," pp. 54, 57, 59; Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead?" p. 11.

Kennedy stayed there out of the ideological necessity to hold the line against Communism, the military necessity to win the war, and the political necessity not to appear to be soft on Communism.

More than elsewhere, Vietnam revealed the bankruptcy of Kennedy's pragmatism, which was reduced to an operationalism that did not question its archaic frame but rejected values and subverted intelligence.[1] The method included imaginatively brainstorming all sort of possibilities and keeping a number of options open, so that one was never left with either war or humiliation as the only alternatives.[2] But in considering all the alternatives cerebrally, the Kennedy men tended not to draw any moral lines; moral concerns were largely bracketed out. There was a sense of mission, but the moral point of view was seen as appropriate to the formation of goals and did not make it into the process of executing them.[3] Kennedy's crisis managers were pre-occupied with the process of decision-making in- means in relative isolation from the ends they bring about.[4] They were operators, not thinkers, bracketing out reflection, doubts, and philosophical views, asking only operational questions and not "where is this leading us?"[5] When more fundamental questions about Vietnam were raised outside the operational frames of both the military and political factions, they were ignored. Chester Bowles' suggestion of a negotiated settlement of the war plus the neutralization of Southeast Asia was dismissed as "imaginative and far-sighted" but premature--and no doubt too soft--and he was demoted again, even exiled this time to India.[6] George

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[1] See Chapter, IV, #3. [2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 783.

[3] Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead?" p. 11.

[4] McDermott, "Crisis Managers," p. 4.

[5] Halberstam, "Education of McGeorge Bundy," p. 21.

[6] Jack Newfield, Robert Kennedy: A Memoir (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1969), p. 122; McDermott, "Crisis Managers," p. 4.

Ball's prediction that the "commitment of the prestige of the United States to the war in Vietnam might eventually require as many as 300,000 American troops to achieve a military solution" was at least considered but also ignored though Ball himself, who sagely made the warning cooly, even blandly, was allowed to stay in the game.[1] What was lacking in the deliberations on Vietnam, as elsewhere, or dismissed when rarely appearing, was a concern for historic values, the application of an *a priori* political judgment which would have wisely reduced the options to the realistic and sensible ones.[2] Without rigorous political judgment, the illusion grows--and Kennedy surely fell for it in Vietnam--that the "intelligence" put out by the intelligence services will dictate the necessary course of action. It never did, but the fault was not so much with the intelligence itself as with the lack of direction which would have provided a context for using it well.[3] When the true shape of the Vietnam situation did become clear after Diem's death, Kennedy's archaism twisted the new knowledge to justify more intense involvement, revealing again Kennedy's basic fault: the use of a truncated modern intelligence in the service of a dynamic archaic zeal without the correction of historic political values.[4]

Kennedy himself was assassinated within a month of Diem's assassination. Kennedy had resisted the Americanization of the war, saying in a September press conference, "In the final analysis, it is their war,"[5] but there was not enough time between Diem's death and his own to see exactly what he was going to do about the new responsibilities which American complicity in the coup engendered. Speculations about what Kennedy would have done had he lived have been legion. Kenneth O'Donnell claims

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[1] Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, p. 157. [2] *Ibid*., p. 258. [3] *Ibid*., p. 193.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 5-6; this is close to Fairlie's own major thesis.

[3] Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 743.

XUM

that Kennedy would have gotten out of Vietnam during his second term when withdrawal from Vietnam would no longer be a campaign issue on which he must not go soft;Neustadt thinks that Kennedy would have kept his bombers and combat troops away; Wicker feels Kennedy would probably do what Johnson did without getting as locked into it.[1] The writers of The Pentagon Papers conclude that "no reliable inference can be drawn about how Kennedy would have behaved in 1965 and beyond had he lived."[2] So be it. Whatever Kennedy would have done, he did not live to do it, but the fact is that in the hands of the Kennedy men--especially the military faction which gained ascendancy after Kennedy's death--using the Kennedy process under Lyndon Johnson, the war in Vietnam became a terrible nightmare, frustrating to hawks and doves alike as Johnson pursued a "middle" course between all-out war and withdrawal. Kennedy had played the Cosmocrator role in several different ways: as the bungling adventurer in the Bay of Pigs invasion; as the would-be dragon-slayer in the Berlin, steel, and Cuban missile crises; as the belated but eager seeker for historic peace and freedom in his dramatic test ban and civil rights initiatives. His uncrystallized role in Vietnam included an element of each: an indecisive muddling through with reliance on intelligence and avoidance of looking soft; a desire to slay the dragon if he would only show up; perhaps an eventual desire for negotiation and reconciliation. With the apotheosis of Kennedy following his death, the people could imaginatively select the Kennedy of their choice from these several tendencies--more hawkish or more dovish as preference dictated or even reincarnated in Robert Kennedy--to magically rescue them, as Cosmocrator, from the disorders of the remainder of the decade, of which the Vietnam quagmire was the chief reality and symbol.

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[1] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 210; Wicker, Kennedy Without Tears, p. 185.

[2] Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 114.

XUM

PART III

THE END

CHAPTER VII

ASSASSINATION

> Perhaps, because the tragedy occurred in our midst; perhaps, because so much of it took place before our very eyes on television, we have not realized its high drama. We have not grasped the fact that a blow which strikes down King, Emperor, Dictator, or President has no equal on the human stage. When that blow takes the life of the mightiest figure of the world, none should be surprised if a shudder passes through society. Did not John Webster exclaim (in the Duchess of Malfi): "Other sins only speak; murder shrieks out."
>
> --Harrison Salisbury

The assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963 stunned the nation, evoking an overwhelming immediate reaction, initiating a profound process of loss and adjustment, and leaving deep memories and wounds. At the scene of the crime, madness reigned as people dived for cover or ran wildly from building to building. The corridors of the hospital to which the dying President was rushed "erupted in pandemonium," as all the demons (pan daimones) were let out. In Washington, the bell in St. John's Episcopal Church "tolled wildly like a fire gong" as if to signal an extraordinary disaster. Motorists in that city were "going beserk," ignoring stop signs, traffic signals, pedestrians, policemen and other motorists, swerving drunkenly from lane to lane, spinning without warning into crazy U-turns, abandoning their cars in the middle of intersections with motors going. . . .[1]

The assassination of a President is no ordinary event. It breaks through the sane veneer of everyday life and evokes confrontation with the chaos which gave it birth and a quest for resources beyond the mundane with which to contain it; it raises Cain and raises Christ, shaking the foundations and searching for foundations, both civil-religious and church-religious. Primordial emotional commitment to the nation and to the President is brought to the surface at such a time. It is a sacred time, wierd, unreal, cataclysmic, intense, suspended, profound. While previous presidential assassinations also caused great consternation, the Kennedy assassination was unusual, if not unprecedented, in the depth of feelings raised, in the speed and extent of news transmission, in the span of television coverage and the amount of television viewing, and in the degree of unity engendered.

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 159, 251.

"The United States," wrote Manchester, "was in the throes of an unprecedented emotional convulsion."[1] An event of such magnitude had intruded that it seemed to touch human experience at some primordial level.[2] This awful murder evoked "feelings, fantasies, and memories from deeply repressed layers of the mind, reaching down . . . to the totem-and-taboo level."[3] Disguises were swept away, and men became unusually "guileless and transparent, . . . artless, whole-souled, and, for once, unashamed of emotional display, . . . emotive and unashamedly demonstrative," feeling a certain kinship, as in war, with those going through the crisis with them.[4] The barriers were down. Some showed emotions they had not shown before.[5] Others completed mourning for dead relatives that they had been previously to inhibited to express fully.[1] Still, there was something different about Kennedy's death. A majority could recall no other time in their lives when they had the same sort of feelings as they encountered when hearing of the assassination of the President.[2] It was spooky. New York City was engulfed in a "frantic quiet." People in the usually bustling, but impersonal, city gathered silently around news stands or radios, completely willing to stop and talk with few hesitating to speak about their personal feelings.[3]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 352 (also pp. 189, x).

[2] Harvey, Historian and Believer, p. p. 254.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. xiv, 225.

[4] Manchester, Death, pp. 367, 564.

[5] Sylvia Ginsparg, Alice Moriarty, and Lois B. Murphy, "Young Teenagers' Responses to the Assassination of President Kennedy: Relation to Previous Life Experiences," in Children and Death, p. 19.

The speed and extent of news transmission and the prevalence of face-to-face communication about it provides one indication of the intensity of response to the assassination.[4] While rarely are more than 80 per cent of the American population ever aware of any given personality or event, 68 per cent of the nation knew that the President had been shot by 1:00 P.M. (a half hour afterwards), 92 per cent knew of his death by 2:00 P.M. (an hour later), and by 6:00 P.M., 99.8 per cent knew it.[5] News of the assassination traveled unusually wide and deep, even into the African bush, "where one would hardly think they had heard of the United States let alone the American President."[6] In Athens, Greece, where one-fourth of the people surveyed were unable to identify President Charles de Gaulle of France just before his arrival the previous week, 99 per cent knew of

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. xix.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," in Kennedy Assassination, ed. by Greenberg, p. 154.

[3] Monroe Miller and Roger Zimmerman, "Immediate and Subsequent Reactions in Manhattan," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 272.

[4] Fred I. Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 222.

[5] Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 152-153.

[6] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 939.

Kennedy's assassination within a day of its occurrence.[1]

In the United States, 49 per cent first heard the news by word of mouth.[2] The compulsion to spread the word--including public officials relaying the news to their wives long distance (quite apart from any concern for national security)--almost brought about a breakdown of the telephone system in some areas, especially in Washington, D.C.[3] More Wesleyan students had to call home than wanted to admit it. There was a compulsion both to ascertain (and transmit) the facts, and, sometimes with that pretext, to make contact and sound each other out on how to react to the situation.[4] Television, whether by way of initial disclosure or confirmation, admirably met the first need; other people were needed for the second. Television--with its realism, vividness, immediacy, instantaneousness, and reliability--swiftly solved the riddle of who fired the shots to most people's initial satisfaction and showed a new President in charge, thereby providing credible standards for gauging threat, alleviating anxiety to test reality beyond the living room, and narcotizing potentially hysterical behaviour.[5]

The amount of television coverage focused on the Kennedy assassination was unusually heavy. It was the first time that the loss of a national leader had been reported in such detail on television. "The intensive coverage that radio and television gave to the events following the assassination was unprecedented," wrote Sheatsley and Feldman, "and it is doubtful if the American public has ever been so saturated with the details of a single event."[1] The television networks suspended regular programming from Friday evening through Monday evening, a 71-hour telethon.[2] Even sports, weather, and newscasts were omitted.[3] Assassination weekend news and events blotted out nearly everything else, and the focus of the coverage, in keeping with the national mood, was on Kennedy, eclipsing the new President.[4] Besides covering major ceremonies (including still photographs of Lyndon Johnson taking the oath of office) and jumping on every little event it could, television coverage was filled in with eulogies for John Kennedy, funeral music, and highlights of Kennedy's life and administration.[5] "For all practical purposes," wrote Schramm, "there was no other nes story in America during those four days, and all the mass media concentrated on telling it."[6]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 530.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 153.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 179, 206.

[4] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," pp. 230-231.

[5] William H. Mindak and Gerald D. Hursh, "Television's Functions on the Assassination Weekend," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 136. See also White, Making President 1964, p. 25.

Likewise, people concentrated on viewing it at home and abroad. Television coverage of the assassination weekend was beamed not only to a stupendous number of American homes but also, via Telstar, to twenty-two foreign countries, including Russia and Japan (though Asian reception was periodic) as well as relaying back foreign expressions of grief, services, and messages, including the benediction of Pope Paul VI, to American audiences, thus compounding the "global" significance of the event. Brazilian television technicians terminated a bitter strike to bring their countrymen the news. Even televisions in store windows were put to use in Paris. "Nothing like this had happened in the history of the human race," wrote White, "so large a participation of mankind in the mortal tragedy of a single individual."[1]

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 157.

[2] Many local television stations suspended programming only on Friday night. When some local stations began slipping in spot commercials on Sunday morning, they were met with indignant telephone calls. The press and radio reduced advertisements and entertainment. See Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 9, and Manchester, Death, p. 512.

[3] Some major items went unreported on TV; Manchester, Death, p. 505.

[4] Manchester, Death, p. 277. For eclipse, see Chapter IX.

[5] Manchester, Death, pp. 346, 530.

[6] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 4.

In America, on any one of the four days of the assassination weekend, at least 95 per cent of the public spent some time listening to the radio or watching television, topping the 88 per cent who listened to the radio following Roosevelt's death.[2] In the average American home, the television set was tuned to the Kennedy report for 31.6 hours over the assassination weekend. The average adult, by his own estimate, spent median times of 8 hours on Friday, 10 hours on Saturday, 8 hours on Sunday, and 8 hours on Monday tuned in. Some watched more. Half the nation watched for more than 12 hours on Saturday; a quarter watched (or listened) for more than 13 hours on one of the four days; a sixth watched for more than 11 hours each day. Some even maintained their vigil overnight. The concentration of viewers tended to increase as the weekend wore on, particularly as it hit its ceremonious conclusion, Monday being the day of heaviest viewing. Thus 70 per cent watched the descent of the President at Andrews Field on Friday night, 85 per cent heard the eulogies in the Capitol rotunda on Sunday afternoon, and, at its peak, 90-93 per cent watched the funeral procession on Monday.[2]

The shared experience of the assassination weekend, largely mediated by television, gave the nation an unusual feeling of unity. Put bluntly,

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 25.

[2] Ibid.; Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 14, 24; Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 159; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 99. These statistics combine NORC (National Opinion Research Center) and Nielsen findings, the latter extrapolated to the nation from the tenth of the population residing in the New York City area.

"television unified the nation."[1] More precisely, Schramm exclaimes:

> There were times during those four days when a majority of Americans were apparently looking at the same events and hearing the same words from their television sets--participating together, at least to that extent, in a great national event. Nothing like this on such a scale had ever occurred before. . . . Never before has such a large proportion of the American people been able to feel so instantly and closely, for three and a half days, a part of events and deeds of great national significance.[2]

The President's assassination seems clearly to have engaged the "gut feelings" of virtually every American, including political apathetics and children. Even articulate Kennedy opponents, sometimes to their own surprise, found themselves swept up in the general tide of mourning. The assassination was "the greatest simultaneous experience this nation or any other has ever shared," spouted Manchester, binding Americans together in shared shock, sorrow, and recovery. Attuned to their televisions in a new social ritual which Wolfenstein calls a "television wake," they passed through protest, disorganization, and re-organization phases of reaction to Kennedy's death:

> A new social ritual was improvised, which we might call the television wake. Mourners across the nation were helped to work through their distress by having images of the man they mourned repeatedly re-evoked, the circumstances of his death presented over and over till disbelief gradually gave way to acceptance of painful reality, and by having their feelings released and relieved by participating at a distance in protracted funeral rites.[3]

Although a very few were undisturbed and some took a very long time to recover, I see most people engaged in the protest phase on Friday, in the disorganization phase on Saturday, and in the re-organization phase on Sunday and Monday. On Friday—apart from the few who accepted it immediately (#1A)—people reacted with shock and disbelief (#1B), some turning to prayer (#1C), at the news of Kennedy's being shot and at the subsequent confirmation of his death. On Saturday, there was nothing for most people to do but watch television, devoted to Kennedy's life and death, and to give way to grief, mourning at a level deeper than political or personal loss the loss of the President as sacred king (#2A) in the roles of imperator (#2B), father (#2C), representative (#2D), and high priest (#2E), as Kennedy's body lay in state at the White House. On Sunday and Monday, recovery was aided by a feeling of national unity (#3A) and by a tendency to idealize and identify with Kennedy (#3B,C), as people participated in church services and public funeral ceremonies (#3D), leading to a catharsis of their discordant emotions and a willingness to pick up the pieces and go on (#3E). At every stage throughout our recapitulation of this journey, we will want to assess the degree to which people were engulfed by an archaic experience, inclined to interpret events from an historic perspective, or able to steel themselves against or set aside any deep involvement from a modern viewpoint.

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 24.

[2] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 4.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. xx. For a brief description of world reactions passing through these same three phases but less intensely, see Chapter VIII, #1. For subsequent memorialization and succession phases, which were rooted in the assassination weekend but extended far beyond it, see Chapters VIII and IX. For the theoretical models from which my five-phase scheme is drawn, see Appendix A.

I. Dead

After abortive heart massage, President Kennedy was pronounced dead at Parkland Hospital on Friday, November 22, at 1:00 P.M. (C.S.T.), just a half hour after he was fatally shot at the intersection of Houston and Elm Streets in downtown Dallas. At 1:23, the news services picked up the remark of the priest who had administered last rites that Kennedy was "dead, all right," topping off earlier less conclusive bulletins indicating that Kennedy had been shot, perhaps fatally. Ten minutes later, the presidential press secretary made the official announcement of death, and the networks relayed it at 1:35.

News of the assassination attempt on the President's life and confirmation of his death were almost universally greeted with shock. Most commentators mention shock as an initial response,[1] and a survey on responses to several assassinations conducted in October 1968 found 94 per cent of its respondents reporting having felt shock over John Kennedy's killing--with an even greater proportion of Easterners, of those over 65, and of women reporting shock. Only 3 per cent of the national sample said that they had not been surprised by Kennedy's being shot, a figure which rises only to 7 per cent among groups least affected (Southerners and non-veteran males).[2] Although it is a strict minority that was able to accept Kennedy's death easily, we will begin with them.

A. Acceptance The simplest response to Kennedy's assassination was given by those who returned right away to normal after the barest shock if any because they never left normalcy or because they regarded the assassination as a restoration of normalcy. At the extreme were a retired general who claimed that it was "the hand of God that pulled the trigger that killed Kennedy" and the lone picket before the White House whose placard read "GOD PUNISHED JFK," both men evidently regarding the assassination, not as a breach, but as a restoration of divine order.[3] Such responses were extremely rare, but their very exceptionality tended to magnify them and, once magnified, the scattered incidents of extremist reaction were used to confirm prejudices. For instance, one might expect that those who strongly opposed Kennedy would rejoice at his death or at least treat it with indifference. Manchester claims that those who never forgave Kennedy for his victory over Big Steel and others who disliked his presidency "adjusted to its end with amazing speed."[1] A few racists were exultant. On the one hand, an Alabama youth called a radio station to say that Kennedy should have been shot for his support of "niggers" and a Nazi in the state capitol at Madison, Wisconsin, proclaimed the assassination a "miracle for the white race;" on the other hand, Malcolm X said, "Chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad; they've always made me glad," and his faithful applauded.[2] Yet Elijah Muhammad suspended Malcolm X for his remark, and, contrary to bloated impressions, statistics show much sympathy for Kennedy even among those most alienated by his recent racial initiatives. The National Opinion Research Center survey found that among the group most opposed to Kennedy's policies--white Southerners who did not vote for him in 1960--62 per cent, compared to 79 per cent nationally, "felt the loss of someone close and dear;"[3] much as they opposed Kennedy, they were almost as upset as the rest of the nation at his heinous removal from the political scene.

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[1] Such as the authors of articles in the Greenberg volume.

[2] A Louis Harris poll of 1176 adults; Kirkham, Assassination, pp. 95, 97, 238.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 249, 557.

As with much of the South, Dallas was hardly Kennedy country, and one might have expected its people to have been much less aggrieved than other sections of the country. Among those prone to blame Dallas for the assassination,[4] the well-publicized incident of suburban Dallas school children applauding news of the assassination could easily be taken as a typical response. If one overlooks the rousing Texas welcome given the

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 367. [2] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 54.

[3] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 167.

[4] Manchester is prone to disparage Dallas and Texas. In an earlier version of his book, he began with Kennedy declining to hunt with Johnson at the LBJ Ranch, obviously associating Johnson and Texas with guns and assassination; see Richard Corry, The Manchester Affair (New York: Putnam, 1967). Localization of evil by scapegoating Dallas contrasts with deeper reactions which saw much evil in world and self; see #2E, below.

Kennedys and dwells only on the "hate atmosphere" with which Dallas greeted him,[1] it is easy to imagine Dallasites gloating over the death of a man they hated. Dallas did feel more shame over the assassination than the rest of the nation,[2] and, in order to ward off the blame heaped upon it from without and within, the city tended to take a posture of defensive indifference,-- manifested in the continuation as scheduled of Friday night football games, in trying to cover up the school-applause incident and threatening the life of the minister who brought it to light, in avoiding mention of the assassination and delaying erection of permanent memorials to Kennedy.[3] Many in Dallas clearly wanted to forget that the assassination had occurred in their city, exposing their sins and, perhaps unfairly, besmirching their name.[4] But the impulse to forget did not prevent most Dallasites from also grieving for the loss of their President. Dallas respondents scored no more than 7 per cent below the national NORC averages for feelings of sympathy, sorrow, loss, and anger in response to the assassination.[5] Local newspaper accounts and the U.P.I. release based, in part, upon them depict Dallas, not as a bastion of callous indifference and reprehensible rejoicing, but as "a tormented town," "an instant city of prayer."[6]

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[1] For the hate atmosphere, see Manchester, Death, pp. 39-51, 109. Sensing more love than hate, Nellie Connally remarked, "You sure can't say Dallas doesn't love you, Mr. President;" ironically, the remark was made moments before the assassination; Manchester, Death, p. 153.

[2] Charles M. Bonjean, Richard J. Hill, and Harry W. Martin, "Reactions to the Assassination in Dallas," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 184.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 288, 250; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 936. The National Football League also maintained its schedule.

[4] The Warren Commission found no evidence for a link between the crime and Dallas' atmosphere of hate; Manchester, Death, p. 41.

[5] Bonjean, "Reactions in Dallas," p. 184. Cf. Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 167, and Bradley S. Greenberg and Edwin B. Parker, "Social Research on the Assassination," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 362.

[6] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 60. See #1C and #2E, below.

Throughout the nation, as in Dallas, not only relief, but also indifference was relatively uncommon. Only 19 per cent of the NORC sample reported being able to carry on pretty much as usual, and only 11 per cent were physically unmoved by the tragedy.[1] Among 132 Connecticut college students in another survey, only 15 per cent were "compulsive closers," people who did not find it hard to believe that Kennedy was really dead. Even the student that Pratt gives as an example of this response felt some shock and disbelief, but he soon became pre-occupied with "irreverent thoughts--curiosity as to what effect it would have on the weekend;" he accepted the assassination and dismissed it as a _fait_ _accompli_, significant only in its effects on the future.[2] Instrumental calculations about the consequences of Kennedy's death for domestic and foreign policy were also fairly common among students at Wesleyan University though some were surprised to find themselves thinking of such matters so soon. In contrast to both humanities students who were largely immobilized by grief and the men in an athletic fraternity who were pre-occupied with devising retribution for the alleged assassin, physical science students tended to continue with their laboratory tasks, to accept the fact of Kennedy's death, and to talk in a coolly analytic way about the political implications of the assassination--though they were made to feel that their response was inappropriate, that there was something wrong with their being so cool and calculating about it. While most of the few who tried to keep studying had some difficulty doing so, one student objected to cancellation of his class, saying, "We can't let this thing upset us that much. You know, we've got to have our class. There's no point in letting this destroy the social order."[1] Like another Wesleyan student who objected to the repetitiousness of the news coverage of the assassination weekend as an inefficient waste of time, a strong majority (74 per cent) of the small group of "compulsive closers" in Pratt's survey subscribed to the statement: "There has been too much attention paid to the President's death; one man's passing should not be allowed to disturb the life of a great nation."[2] Nationwide, however, a belief that too much had been made of the assassination was not very common, even among erstwhile Nixon supporters.[3]

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 154.

[2] Carolyn Pratt and Robert E. Lane, "Patterns of Closure: College Students' Return to Political 'Normalcy,'" in _Children and Death_, pp. 180, 182.

Young children, more than adults, showed a tendency to be oblivious or positively jaunty about the assassination. A clumsy, obese boy who had suffered humiliation from failing to pass a physical fitness test in school exclaimed: "Someone should have shot him sooner. Then we would not have to have all this physical fitness."[4] Others complained about their usual television programs being cancelled. Noting that "although our leader dies, our system of government won't die because a new president will take his place," a Topeka teenager complained:

> I felt that Kennedy was just one person and that because he was president was no reason to stop other people's enjoyment. After all, they don't stop all programs on Sunday. Sunday is God's day and God is much greater than any president.[5]

Out of the 57 Topeka teenagers questioned, only half a dozen--most of them having lost a parent and having become convinced that trouble is a part of life--accepted directly the news of Kennedy's death, appearing, if anything, to be too ready to believe bad news.[1] Similarly, a New Haven pool hall boy, who conceded that killing someone who was "at the pinnacle of the highest office you could get in this country" brought a special shock, discounted its importance by pointing out that "people are getting killed every day, people are getting beat up, skulls bashed in; I mean, that's been around since Caesar was assassinated."[2] A boy who sympathesized with a man's loss of his President simply failed to make any connection with himself, saying, "He wasn't ours; my Mommy and Daddy didn't vote for him. He didn't mean anything to us."[3] Despite their lack of understanding of the assassination and their irritation at its pre-emption of their favorite Saturday morning cartoons, however, most children were upset by the unaccustomed sight of their parents, ordinarily active, restrained, and cheerful, now immobilized, weeping, and depressed.[4]

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[1] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," pp. 229-230, and "Young Men and the Death of a Young President," in Children and Death, pp. 202-205.

[2] Pratt, "Patterns of Closure," p. 189. By contrast, only 21 per cent of the "non-closers" and 33 per cent of the "closers" agreed with this statement. For a definition of these two types and a description of their greater difficulty in adjusting to the assassination, see Chapter IX, #1.

[3] James S. Coleman and Sidney Hollander, Jr., "Changes in Belief in the Weeks Following the Assassination," in Kennedy Assassination, pp. 259, 264.

[4] Martha Wolfenstein, "Death of a Parent and Death of a President: Children's Reactions to Two Kinds of Loss," in Children and Death, p. 74.

[5] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," p. 2.

In reports of reactions in schools to the announcement of the assassination, there were recurrent references to some child who laughed, earning the reprobation of his elders and the cudgeling of his classmates; it is clearly a forbidden response, soon regretted by the chastised child. Beyond reaction to the announcement as an incredible joke or mere tension release, Wolfenstein suggests that such laughter is indicative of a feeling of triumph over the dead, rooted in envy. In a hereditary monarchy or aristocracy, wishing for another's position is discouraged since one's station in life is regarded as divinely ordained. But in a democracy, the official ideology proclaims that anyone can be President of the United States, and it is easier for an individual to feel it unfair that another should be President. Just as the ancient Greeks projected their envy in their doctrine of hybris, which specified inevitable retribution against the great who vaunted themselves too highly, so many Americans may have covertly rejoiced to see the mighty Kennedy fallen, however much they would repress that feeling in themselves and condemn it in others (e.g., in Malcolm X). Ordinarily, even in a democracy, defenses against envy of the prominent are strong and plentiful, among them vicarious pleasure in their success which sublimates envy into admiration, diversion of antagonism into counteracting their opponents, an emphasis on the sufferings and burden of the great, and a leveling view according to which a man in high office is just doing another job. But the Kennedy family, with their many extraordinary advantages and successes, strained the usual defenses against envy. Some of this strain was relieved by expressing envy in disguised form through humor, not only in laughing at news of the assassination, but also in the plenitude of Kennedy jokes which circulated while he lived and then reappeared, less plentifully, in the guise of sick jokes after his death.[1]

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[1] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," p. 8.

[2] James D. Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion and Recovery from the Kennedy Assassination," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 124.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 288.

[4] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 224, xvii.

Josephine Miles, in her poem "Frontier," depicts--in images drawn from the gunsmoke ethic of American individualism--how the assassin might have broken through the defenses which submerge the envy of most to overtly express it in shooting the President:[2]

> Daniel Boone stepped up to a window
> (What! a window?) with his trusty rifle,
> And he shot his bear.
> This was some bear.
> It was a millionaire.
> A Harvard, London, and a South Sea bear
> A French, a football bear.

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 229-230.

[2] For the contrast between Kennedy and Oswald, as his alleged assassin, and the possibility of envy among his motives, see #2E below.

A corporate family
And incorporate party
Thoroughly transistized
Into his rocking chair
Built and bureaucratized,
Daddied and deared and dared,
Indomitable bear.

What an investment
Of time, of love too,
All in one body,
A computation
Of maximal purpose,
A one man world.

Daniel is angry
That after the eighth grade
This bear should travel
So far ahead.
Unfair
That a bear
Should rock so big a chair.

So gets him, and he is got
Shows him
Shows us
It takes no complicated bomb or plot
To win again us back to wilderness,
But just one pot-pure, individual-shot.[1]

In a similar vein, Alan Ansen captures the notion of the little man felling the giant with all his pretensions and bringing him down to his level in his poem "The Death of Nearchus:"

A cipher can vote No
With his trigger finger
Against the insolence
Of pretensions to charm and good will
On the part of the already gifted. . . .

He also sees the counterpart of the "excellence in the manifold of fields / American hospitality unfences for talents" to be an "anarch generosity" which "rewards the untalented too / With a liberal target / For their discentents."[2] The democratic ethos in which no lines are fixed, where every one can make it--indeed, where no one is supposed to be a loser and carries heavy guilt if he is one--where the elite and the masses are not steeled from each other, is inherently and intentionally disorderly. It is the democratization of the presidency which makes the president so available to the people and the democratization of society which lifts restrictions on access to fame and fortune and threatens its leaders with challenges both from competitors and from madmen. "You have to face the fact that assassination's a democratic act," said Murray Kempton, "because the same process of free development which will produce a great novelist will also unexpectedly produce an assassin."[1]

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[1] Josephine Miles,"Frontier," in Of Poetry and Power (ed. by Glikes), p. 24, and in "The Death of J.K." (compiled by W. Nicholas Knight), p. 8.

[2] Alan Ansen, "The Death of Nearchus," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 98.

As we have repeatedly noted, those who readily accepted Kennedy's death were a tiny minority. Yet it is among these responses that the most modern response would fall. On the modern view, the president is a mere office-holder whose replacement by another who is likely to pursue similar policies should be no cause for alarm as long as national interests and private interests are not threatened by the switch. Toward the Kennedy assassination, indifference would have been the most appropriate response from a modern point of view. Yet the very few who greeted the assassination with indifference tended to feel bad or defensive about it. The student who thought about how the assassination would affect his weekend plans felt he was being "irreverent" in the archaic religious atmosphere which prevailed; those who calculated the political consequences of the assassination were made to feel callous. Not only peers but several commentators suggest that indifference was not commendable but pathological. In teenagers, the response of indifference was more likely to be rooted in a defensiveness against being upset by a further loss, they tell us, while

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[1] Murray Kempton cited by Alvarez, Under Pressure, p. 110.

XUM

among college students, it was those who required the security of normal routines and those who had been schooled to think analytically and dispassionately who were most prone to indifference (a response thus more characteristic than callous). Pratt tenuously attributes a "pathological inability to grieve or mourn" to her "compulsive closers," whom she labels "fugitives from affect."[1] The indifference of children tended to be excused. Most of the indifferent responses of young children were viewed not as representing a pathological callousness but simply as reflecting the fact that they had not yet reached the stage of attaching any major feelings to personages so remote from them as the President and the fact that, even if their feelings were hurt, largely as a rebound from parental upset, their capacity for protracted mourning was small and their sadness span short.[2] Challenging comments or laughter, however, was not accepted as the wisdom of babes but condemned as impertinent, meeting immediately with adult dismay and indignation and subsequently with commentators' attempts to explain such inappropriate behaviour.

By contrast, Fairlie is fairly sympathetic to the fat boy who resented Kennedy as instigator of physical fitness, noting how pervasively Kennedy had "intuded into the personal lives of even boys and girls in school,"[3] and I wonder if there is not historic wisdom in the comment of the Topeka teenager that God is greater than any president who is, after all, just one man. Though it hardly justifies assassination and dubiously legitimates a system in which assassination is a "democratic" option, there is something unfair in an archaic "one man world," and there is--if not divine retribution (as claimed by extremists who even more archaically regarded America's traditional social structures as divine)—at least a degree of justice, of Kennedy reaping the rewards of self-exaltation,[1] of hybris punished, of chickens come home to roost in Kennedy's being laid low. But in the archaic atmosphere which reigned immediately after the assassination even more, much more, than during Kennedy's life, such thoughts were repressed and condemned as almost all Americans reacted with great shock and loss at the death of a man they had ranked among the gods.

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[1] Pratt, "Patterns of Closure," pp. 189-190.

[2] Wolfenstein, "Death of Parent and President," pp. 72-77.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 234. Kennedy was used to promote not diversity but a single athletic ideal which was oppressive and against the felt interests of these not athletically inclined who rightly resented him.

B. Disbelief Most Americans could not readily accept President Kennedy's death. Mindak, for instance, reports that two thirds of his depth interview subjects in Minneapolis did not immediately comprehend the reality of the murder of the President, and the findings and hunches of others are similar.[2] Throughout the nation, disbelief in the forms of incredulity, denial, and bewilderment was fairly common.

Incredulity was often the first response to hearsay that the President had been shot. "The assassination was so fantastic that the general reaction was utter incredulity," Manchester tells us.[3] Some took the announcement as a bad joke.[4] Sheer incredulity, however, did not last long; the search for facts was quickly and definitively met for most by turning to television. But the news that Kennedy was shot gave rise to desperate wishes that he would live, which confirmation of his death did not immediately extinguish. One Wesleyan student said:

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[1] Cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 96.

[2] Mindak, "Television's Fuhctions," p. 131; Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 157; Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Reactions," p. 8; Sigel, "School Children's Reactions," p. 49.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 207.

[4] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 223; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 935.

> The first report was just the fact that he had been shot and I initially thought, well, he might have just been wounded. It's nothing really serious. They'll patch him up and he'll be all right. But then it came across that he was dead. I still, of course, didn't believe it; it just wouldn't sink in.[1]

As this example illustrates, disbelief as incredulity soon gave way to disbelief as denial. In reporting that the most commonly reported initial comments of Wesleyan students were expressions of disbelief, such as "It can't be true," Greenstein notes that this disbelief, rather than indicating skepticism, constituted denial--an attempt to ward off painful information. It had none of the qualities of reservation of judgment but represented an inability and unwillingness to assimilate the news. Some students engaged in "undoing" fantasies about how the assassination could have been prevented--e.g., by someone interposing himself between Kennedy and his assassin or by Kennedy bending down to tie his shoe--on the basis that "if I don't accept it, perhaps it will prove not to have happened."[2] The classic example of denial was Dallas' Mayor Cabell, having rushed to Parkland Hospital, whispering "It didn't happen."[3]

The news media carried many reports of "can't happen here" statements which, like the "can't believe it" statements, indicate not simply incredulity but a denial which protests against the shocking wrongness of presidential murder as a major breach in public order. A Wesleyan student could accept Presidents being shot in other eras and other figures being shot today, but the idea of the President being shot today was unthinkable.[4] Miller found people in New York City so pre-occupied with speaking out their feelings about the impossibility of the deed that they were not able to answer his question about when they first heard the news of it.[1] Even at the scene of the crime itself, Lady Bird Johnson thought, "Oh, no, that can't be! This is America. There are no assassins here." It was not until she saw flags at half-mast that the enormity of what had happened first struck her.[2]

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[1] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 223.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 223, 232; Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," pp. 195, 221.

[3] Manchester, *Death*, p. 180.

[4] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," pp. 227, 223.

On a more somatic level, disbelief took the form of bewilderment, which insulated against fully grasping the dire situation. Mindak reports disbelief in his subjects both on a verbal and on a somatic level among his subjects: "They expressed disbelief and were defensively shocked, stunned, or dazed."[3] Nationwide, 57 per cent of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) sample reported feeling "sort of dazed and numb," with the figure rising to 65 per cent among pro-Kennedy northerners and dipping to 47 per cent among white non-Kennedy southerners.[4] One Wesleyan student--who was obsessed with the thought, "My God, it can't happen here and it can't happen now. This sort of thing just isn't done in the United States"--was set off into a sequence of fearing a civil war, getting angry, feeling physically and emotionally sick, smacking the wall and then shaking all over until he was emotionally blah and exhausted. Another reported that when the tragic news struck home, "The stomach just dropped right out."[5] A Topeka teenager wrote, "There was a hollow empty pit in the middle of my stomach. I was just numb and stunned;" another described his experience as a "terrible nightmare."[6] Several Wesleyan students, to their own surprise, felt an initial numbness, no immediate feelings, possibly out of an inability to deal with emotions that were aroused. Some felt an increased awareness of their own subjectivity, remembering their immediate state of mind in vivid detail, often accompanied by a sense of unreality or strangeness of the external environment--both in terms of the events being reported from Dallas and in terms of the students' immediate surroundings--reflected in remarks such as "I was looking at it almost from a distance" and "it was like recalling a dream."[1]

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[1] Miller, "Reactions in Manhattan," p. 272.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 156, 167, 240.

[3] Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 131.

[4] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 158.

[5] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 225.

[6] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," p. 9.

Like Lady Bird Johnson and these students, many required an external confirmation of Kennedy's death to overcome their disbelief and "bring them back to reality." Those at the hospital in Dallas reacted to the black habit of the priest coming to administer last rites as a "universally recognized chevron of death."[2] Students who experienced numbness or a slow-burn effect had their belief and release of feelings triggered by such things as seeing news of the assassination in print or talking about it with others. Indeed, the compulsion to talk often expressed the need to overcome disbelief and to accept the fact with the help of friends or relatives.[3] Pierre Salinger would not believe that the President was "really dead" until he saw the coffin placed on the catafalque in the White House on Saturday morning.[4]

Different people, of course, overcame their disbelief at different rates during the crisis weekend. Frequently, disbelief was not overcome all at once but continued as a recurrent undercurrent. Schlesinger confesses that he only intermittently believed that the President was dead.[1] Throughout the weekend, Wesleyan students frequently said that they still could not believe that the assassination had happened, adding that "of course" they realized the President was dead. Expressing a feeling that was widely shared, one student reported, "Every time someone here says, 'Kennedy's dead," I get a little of the same initial shock and I have to say to myself, 'Yeah, that's right, Kennedy's dead.'" The continual need to reassure himself of the fact of death points to the potency of emotions stirred up by it to which he could only gradually accomodate himself. When disbelief finally gave way, it was often to a torrent of tears. "'Oh, no!' we cried from hearts stopped by shock, from minds fighting the word," writes Saul Pett, "but the word came roaring back, 'True, true, true,' and disbelief dissolved into tears, more tears probably than this nation has ever shed over any single event in history."[2]

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[1] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," pp. 225-226.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 215.

[3] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 226.

[4] Manchester, Death, pp. 441, 359. Salinger had kept himself distracted by throwing himself into an all-night poker game.

A modern response to the assassination might greet the news of it with some degree of incredulity until its accuracy was confirmed but would not refuse to believe it. An historic response, after an initial shock, would soon put the event in perspective and come to grips with it. But the predominate archaism of the typical American response, more pronounced in some than in others, was revealed in the great degree of denial, which testifies to an inability to assimilate strong emotions, and even more in bewilderment, especially the remoteness from everyday reality which a few Wesleyan students reported. It strikes me that a person must have a lot invested in a President to "flip out" over his death. Some"shaking of the

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 566.

[2] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 16. For persistent disbelief after the assassination weekend, see Chapter IX, #1.

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foundations" must have been experienced or desperately warded off to make the everyday world seem unreal even if only as a temporary defense. Without suggesting that these students were transformed into instant contemplatives, the kind of distancing from the world to which they were consigned was, nevertheless, the kind the saints seek. While no special religious insights were reported as a result, the vividness of recollections and the openness of minds to the imprinting of the events and recapitulations of the crisis weekend played a potent role in preserving the images through which Kennedy was memorialized.[1] This experience of non-ordinary reality, similar to that sought in mysticism or induced by drugs--where sensitivity to details of consciousness is also noted--may be characterized in the broadest sense as "religious experience," albeit of an archaic sort. Spontaneous religious experience is probably not uncommon in times of intense crisis. Though its focus was more historic, it was, after all, in the year that King Uzziah died--and with much trembling--that Isaiah saw the Lord.

C. Prayer Many Americans turned to God in the assassination crisis. Nationally, three quarters of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) sample reported that they said special prayers some time during the assassination weekend, a figure matched by upper class Dallas respondents in Bonjean's survey but trailed by its lower class respondents (52 per cent). Among the prayers offered by respondents in the NORC sample, over half were for the Kennedy family and a third for the dead President's soul while only a quarter each were for the welfare of the nation or for the new President, indicating a higher degree of personal sympathy than political concern.[2]

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[1] See the introduction to Chapter VIII, below.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 159; Bonjean, "Reactions in Dallas," p. 180. For the class factor in assassination responses, see Appendix B, #3.

"Never before in our history," exclaimed Joseph D. Munier in the Archdiocese of San Francisco's Civic Requiem for President Kennedy, "have Americans of every creed turned to God and prayed more fervently for any hero or for any bereaved family."[1]

Initial prayers bristled with deprecation and supplication while later prayers partook more of absolution and consolation. At the scene of the assassination, Jacqueline Kennedy cried out, "My God, what are they doing? My God, they've killed Jack, they've killed my husband, Jack, Jack!"[2] and several others (e.g., Speaker McCormack, Maude Shaw, Ralph Yarborough, Dave Powers) made similar apostrophes to deity protesting the incomprehensible intrusion of the assassination before the power that maintains cosmic order.[3] Some tried to counteract the bad magic of the situation with good magic, those in the Catholic tradition, especially, having ritual actions and prayers readily available for emergencies. Kenneth O'Donnell and Dave Powers crossed themselves; Powers and Ted Reardon muttered holy names: "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph." Sargent Shriver, Joseph English, and Marie Fehmer recited Hail Marys. Mary Gallagher plucked wildly at rosary beads and whispered, "If I ever needed them, I need them now."[4]

Many of the prayers at this time were for divine intervention to effect the President's survival. Mrs. Kennedy kneeled in her husband's blood and prayed in the operating room while heart massage was being administered to her dead husband. Convinced that he had been killed, yet partially denying it, she prayed, "Oh my God, if he could live, I'd just do everything all my life for him."[1] Cardinal Cushing of Boston sent word to the 400 parishes in his diocese to "pray, pray, pray" for Kennedy while he himself begged the Almighty to spare the President's life. Ted Reardon chanted over and over, "Dear God, just let him be wounded."[2] An older adolescent, who had some time before ceased to believe in God, found herself praying--when she heard that the President was shot--that he should not die, older feelings coming to the surface in the stress of a great threat,[3] perhaps comparable to the alleged lack of atheists in foxholes.

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[1] Joseph D. Munier cited by Fine, That Day With God. (italics omitted)

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 160. Atypically, U.P.I. omits reference to God in its rendering of Jacqueline's cry (Four Days, p. 17). For Knight's likening Jacqueline's cry to that of Christ on the cross, see #2E, below.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 245-248, 156, 170. All used the vocative, "My God," which may, like swearing, be only implicitly religious; in this context, however, a religious interpretation does not seem far-fetched.

[4] Manchester, Death, pp. 159, 309, 245-248, 175, 388.

After President Kennedy's death was pronounced, prayer continued to be in order though its tone changed. At Parkland Hospital, Father Oscar Huber, pastor of Dallas' Holy Trinity parish, administered last rites to Kennedy. "If it is possible," the priest began in Latin, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Making a sign of the cross on Kennedy's forehead with holy oil, Father Huber then entreated, "Through this holy annointing, may God forgive you whatever sins you have committed. Amen," and followed the prayer with an Apostolic Blessing granting plenary indulgence and remission of all sins, thus through the use of the Church's traditional prayers explicitly, though not pointedly, acknowledging the historic belief that a President is neither sinless nor divine before a forgiving God who is both. Prodded to proceed beyond that minimal form by Dr. George Burkley, the President's personal physician--who felt that the solemnity of a President's passing required more than that brusque ceremony--Father Huber led into the Lord's Prayer and a Hail Mary, with Dr. Burkley and Mrs. Kennedy responding with the second half of each prayer. Finally, the priest intoned, "Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord," while wiping the blood-stained oil from Kennedy's head, and Mrs. Kennedy answered, "And let perpetual light shine upon him." Having extended the sympathy of himself and his parishioners to the President's widow and having assured her that her husband's soul had not yet left his body, making it a valid last sacrament, Father Huber left the hospital and recorded "Pres. John Kennedy" in his parish sick call registry. Although his minstrations seemed almost perfunctory, treating the President's death like any other--which, in part, from an historic perspective, it is--Father Huber was not unmoved by its special significance. "This was different," he said laconically; "it wasn't the blood; it was the enormity of it." And Father James Thompson, his assistant, noticing blood on his hand, exclaimed under his breath, "The blood of a President. My God," as his fist tightened in a rage so strong that he declined to cross himself in such a mood.[1]

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 185-186 (italics omitted). [2] Ibid., p. 212.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 224.

Not only Kennedy's last rites, but also his funeral and many of the church services in between--including the hundred masses that students of Notre Dame University were preparing to sing[2]--focused primarily on the absolution, rest, and welfare of his soul. Through soul-belief and these services which expressed it, people were able to hang on to Kennedy even in the process of losing him. This is especially clear in his immediate family. The children's governess, Maude Shaw, told Caroline Kennedy that her father had gone to heaven after his wee dead son Patrick. "God has made him a guardian angel over you," she said; "his light will always shine down on you." Likewise, Ethel Kennedy told Jacqueline that the President had gone striaght to heaven and was "just showering graces down on us."[1]

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 214-219; A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 15.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 352-354.

In contrast to a modernism which knows no god and an archaism which had just lost its god (or its divine representative), prayerful approach to a God who stands over against the immediate tragedy of the assassination is clearly an historic response though its focus tended, in this case, to be more personal than civil-religious. The soul-belief common to many of the priestly and private prayers acknowledged the loss of Kennedy insofar as it faced the fact that his life on earth was over, but it also partially denied the loss by believing that he survived his death in another realm and might even, as the remarks of Maude Shaw and Ethel Kennedy illustrate, affect earthlings. Especially in Ethel's case, soul-belief was used as denial as she greeted news of the assassination with an immediate religious explanation as a means of warding off initial acknowledgement of any breach in the world's order.[2] Generally, however, religion functioned to ease rather than block the process of coming to grips with the reality of Kennedy's death by encouraging assimilation of it in a wider frame. The church's use of soul-belief in its death-related liturgies and minstrations provided a temporary halfway house between denying the loss and fully accepting it which paved the way for a gradual reconciliation to the loss. Especially at first, churches provided sanctuary from the extraordinary shock of presidential murder and a place to pull one's self together and face the loss, attenuated by soul-belief, muted by religious interpretation, and supported by fellow believers in an historic atmosphere of enduring confidence in a transcendent divine power who feels but survives the tragedy.

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 409, 416.

[2] For the whole problem of reconciling the tragedy with a divine order and Ethel's own problem accepting Oswald's murder, see #2E, below.

II. Descent into Hell

"A shocked and stricken world," said Cardinal Cushing in a eulogy, "stands helpless before the face of death."[1] As the shock of the Kennedy assassination wore off and grief set in, people were left with a widespread feeling of helplessness.[2] Unlike a disaster, there were no practical steps to be taken and precious few diversions potent enough to prevent for long the facing of the loss. Organized social actions, which are very effective in keeping people's minds off the tragedy itself in most natural disasters, were almost entirely absent in this case though the ready response to appeals for money for the widows Tippitt and Oswald indicates how strongly people felt the need to do something concrete and useful.[3] But there was nothing to do but wait and watch. Much like those who stare compulsively at disaster sites in attempts to come to grips with emotions stirred by a gross disturbance of their environment, many pilgrims journeyed to Dallas or to Washington or followed the hegira in between, a few in person, a great many via television.[4] In Dallas, some rushed to the assassination site to gape or lay a wreath. In the holy city of Washington, D.C., the axis mundi for archaic nationalism, a crowd of three thousand gathered to watch the dead President be carried off the plane at Andrews Air Force Base, and an even larger crowd waited outside Bethesda Naval Hospital while an autopsy was performed. With great sympathy, Manchester comments on their helplessness as they watched and waited:

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[1] Richard Cardinal Cushing, "Eulogy," cited by Norbert Murray, Legacy of an Assassination (New York: Pro-People Press, 1964), p. 5.

[2] For expressions of helplessness by Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson and by Earl Warren, see Manchester, Death, pp. 236, 388 and U.P.I., Four Days, p. 33.

[3] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 8; alleged assasin Lee Harvey Oswald shot Patrolman Tippitt and was later shot by Jack Ruby.

[4] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. xvi.

> The huge mob was to grow huger, but it was docile. Like the three thousand at Andrews, those here simply gazed. After the first hour most of the insiders forgot they were here. Ben Bradlee, who didn't, continued to regard them as ghouls "or the kind of people who show up at society funerals." That was unkind. Like Ben they were here out of respect, touched by what Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature." They didn't want to bother anyone, and they weren't a bother. Not knowing how else to express themselves they just stood, some all night.[1]

When the Kennedy limousine left Bethesda in the middle of the night, it was followed by hundreds of automobiles in a kind of ghoulish recapitulation of the sunny motorcade in Dallas that had ended so abruptly. The cavalcade was greeted by early-shift workmen standing at attention by their cars, overnight filling station attendants with caps over their hearts, bareheaded Negroes on the sidewalks,[2] the sort of common folk who had been most attracted to Kennedy and grieved most heavily for him. Nevertheless, although surveys showed that grief was more marked among Kennedy partisans, Negroes, Democrats, females, lower class people, Catholics, and, perhaps, teenagers, they also concluded that virtually every American grieved over the loss of President Kennedy.[3] Grieving over his loss, in person or on television, was just about the "only show in town" on Saturday, and very few were not caught up in it.

The day's events are quickly told. At 4:34 A.M., the flag-draped coffin bearing the body of John Kennedy was driven through the northwest gate of the White House, escorted up its flamelit driveway by an honor guard of Marines, carried through its shrouded doorway, and placed upon a replica of Lincoln's catafalque in the East Room. The entire room had been decorated in keeping with a Lincoln engraving with the chandeliers, door, and windows bordered in black crepe and with wooden candlesticks at the corners of the bier and a crucifix at its foot. A death watch made up from all the armed services, including the Special Forces (Green Berets), took up its station around the coffin while clergymen from all major faiths, including the Greek Orthodox, were preparing to pray over the dead President by turns in two prie-dieux which had been set up for the occasion.[1] Upon arrival of the coffin, Father John Kuhn of St. Matthew's Catholic Church gave a brief blessing, reading the De Profundis: "Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. . . ." Mrs. Kennedy knelt by the flag, burying her face in the field of stars, and then retired. She returned to the East Room, after a difficult Confesion, for a ten o'clock Mass for family and friends, both Catholic and non-Catholic.

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 397. [2] Ibid., p. 563.

[3] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 167; Greenberg, "Social Research on the Assassination," pp. 361-382. For details on differences in reaction, see Appendix B, "A Segmental Analysis of Grief Reactions," below.

After the Mass, President Johnson arrived from the Executive Office Building and passed the closed coffin, followed by Presidents Eisenhower and Truman, members of both houses of Congress--including dying Senator Engle of California in a wheelchair--the justices of the Supreme Court, the Cabinet, the diplomatic corps, state governors--including Ross Barnett and a large delegation of Mississippians[2]--and, finally, newsmen and White House servants.[3] The television networks treated viewers to seven hours focused on the White House porch, covering the stately pantomime of dignitaries going into, and out from, visiting Kennedy's coffin in the East Room. Others watched from beyond the White House fence. It did not seem to matter that there wasn't much to see or learn. The authors of Four Days observe:

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[1] For the function of the state in recognizing which faiths are major, see also Chapter I, #2, above. Because of Kennedy's special love for counterinsurgency, the Green berets specially identified with him.

[2] Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett was Kennedy's adversary in a dispute over the enrollment of James Meredith in the University of Mississippi in 1962; see Chapter VI, #6, above.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 467-469.

> Saturday was a day out of time, a day in which crowds stood mutely in the cold drizzle, watching the White House, waiting for something to happen. Tens of millions of Americans sat in front of their television sets listening to reporters who had nothing to report.[1]

People watched television compulsively--staying up until the networks signed off, neglecting their usual household routines, turning on all their sets--chalking up the highest average television viewing (ten hours) on Saturday, the day when the least was happening.[2] Many found such extensive watching depressing. Within the National Opinion Research Center sample, 34 per cent reported wanting to turn off the television but not being able to get themselves to do so; another 14 per cent did succeed in turning off their sets at times "because they couldn't stand hearing so much tragic news."[3] But few diversions worked for any length of time. Not many sought oblivion through alcohol or sedatives, and several found them ineffective, an "astounding immunity to alcohol" testifying to the depth of their trauma.[4] Many tried to keep busy. Officials issued fatuous orders, made unnecessary long-distance telephone calls, tidied up their appearance (e.g., getting a haircut). Reporters (and others) took furious notes, some of them illegible, and agents scurried about visiting vending machines and setting up chairs as the search for something to do became intense at the hospital.[5] Manchester comments on the ultimate futility of these diversionary tactics:

> Thus men turned away from the unwieldy central event and seized upon details with almost pathetic gratitude. One by one they could be wrapped with understanding and tucked away on the narrow shelves of the mind, postponing that awful moment when all the wrapping and tucking would be done and the enormous fact that would not fit must be faced.[6]

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 43.

[2] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 3, 23; Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 133; Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 232;

[3] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 159.

[4] Ibid., p. 186: In the NORC sample, only 3 per cent reported feeling like getting drunk; Manchester, Death, pp. 349, 411, 430, 451, 501.

[5] Manchester, Death, pp. 178-182, 248, 231.

[6] Ibid., pp. 179-180.

When people returned to the fact of Kennedy's death, they tended to return to television to continue the process of grieving. In the Minneapolis sample, two thirds became depressed from watching television and sought some temporary relief, but five out of every six persons interviewed recalled being drawn back to the television set.[1] Television forced people to seek diversion, but it also drew them back again to face and work through their loss. It served as a "catalyst for emotions, inducing a deep sense of participation in the flow of events,"[2] and the repeated exposure to the fact of the Kennedy assassination which it provided battered down the initial defenses of shock, incredulity, denial, and bewilderment. Likewise, initial religious explanations were rarely maintained intact, as people dipped into the "inner turmoil, inchoate distress, anxiety, restlessness, and thoughts in disarray" of the disorganization phase of grieving.[3] "By broadcasting nothing but programs related to the President's death," writes Barber, "the television networks provided the public with a sustained opportunity to participate, vicariously but intensely, in the experience and expression of grief."[4] For many, with television as backdrop, the Kennedy assassination provided the occasion for a very deep grief, indeed.

A. Loss of a King The social scientists who devised questions and analyzed responses to the Kennedy assassination tended to conclude that its impact was felt more in personal terms than in political terms, but they rarely probed beneath the personal idiom in which much grief was expressed.

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[1] Mindak, "Television's Functions," pp. 138-139. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

[3] Wolfenstein, *Children and Death*, p. 222. Such explanation was often incorporated later in a religious understanding, which, rather than "explaining away" the loss, acknowledged and overcame it in a larger frame during the process of recovery; see Chapter IX, #2, below.

[4] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 112.

The National Opinion Research Center survey, for instance, found that 92 per cent of its sample--the highest percentage on any of its indices--felt "so sorry for Kennedy's wife and children" with this being "a very deepest feeling" for 61 per cent; 88 per cent felt "sorry that a strong young man had been killed at the height of his powers" with this being "a very deepest feeling" for 52 per cent; 79 per cent reported feeling "the loss of someone very close and dear" with this being "a very deepest feeling" for 45 per cent.[1] Within the slight minority (47 per cent) who could think of some other time in their life when they had the same sort of feelings, more than half referred to the death of a parent, close friend, or relative rather than to a political tragedy.[2] Nevertheless, although Kennedy's loss was felt more in personal than in political terms, I contend that personal loss--whether pity for the murdered Kennedy or sympathy for his family or sorrow over the loss of a loved one--was not the most basic reaction to the assassination, despite the widespread statistical incidence of these responses. After all, a majority could not think of any other time when they had such feelings, and for many others, I believe, personal imagery was a mask for feelings deeper yet. People tended to personify the assassination because emotions tend to seek a human object rather than an abstraction, because personal symbols help one to meaningfully grasp the event, because its multitudinous political ramifications cannot be easily comprehended.[3] The very need to personify the assassination, however, suggests that there are other very significant dimensions to this event, which are not easily grasped or faced, which are submerged in the process of personification, which continue to remain jarringly at the outskirts of consciousness. Reacting to the assassination with personal feelings of pity, sympathy, and sorrow, as to death of an ordinary loved one, may have been an easier way of facing the loss, but it did not do full justice to it as the loss was often freighted with other meanings which did not fit its frame.

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 156. The comparable statistics for the Dallas sample are: 90 per cent (sympathy), 83 per cent (pity), 72 percent (sorrow); Bonjean, "Reactions in Dallas," p. 188.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 156, 168; Verba, "Political Commitment," pp. 358, 352. Fears for political consequences were also a minority phenomenon; see #B, below.

[3] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 168.

Some Wesleyan students, for instance, reported, oddly enough, feeling more grief over Kennedy's death than over the loss of their own relatives and friends, not, I contend, because Kennedy was really more important to them on a personal level, which would have indeed been strange, but because he meant so much to them on other levels. The surprise with which the students greeted their own feelings suggests a potency in their relationship to Kennedy which outstrips the familial mold in which it was put. Though he could not explain it, one Wesleyan student felt as if someone very close to him had died and was much more upset than he was when his grandfather died. Another accepted the death of a real good buddy matter-of-factly, but his feeling of loss over Kennedy was intensified because not only he himself but the whole country was, as he put it, "without a friend and leader," a man so important that, though he felt queer in saying it, he felt it would have been better if his own ill and hospitalized mother had died. Involving displacement--though not merely displacement--Greenstein concludes on the basis of such evidence that "citizens do develop exceptionally deep attachments to leaders."[1]

It remains to probe the nature of the relationship. Senator Hubert Humphrey was struck by a telephone call, which he calls characteristic of many that he received, from a Twin Cities cab driver who wanted to tell him

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[1] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 229, and "Young Men and Death," p. 196.

that "his whole family wanted to be remembered to . . . Mrs. Kennedy and the children and how sorry they were they had lost their great friend President Kennedy;" Humphrey took this as testimony to "how wonderful it is that the people of the country felt so close to the President."[1] Yet what kind of closeness was it? Were the President and the cabbie really friends in any ordinary sense? I think not. The cabbie knew the President, who did not know him, not in the usual way of friends, but through the mass media, which portrayed Kennedy as a very attractive personality and fostered the illusion that it was his personality which drew men to him. Knowing intimate details of Kennedy's life no doubt endeared him to many people and enabled them to feel his loss on a personal level, but it highly unlikely that a personality equally well-known, however winning, who was not President would have been mourned as universally and as profoundly. Celebrities in the entertainment world who die, for instance, may cause intense grief but only in the limited segments of the population who identify with them.[2] Other powerful and well-known political figures are not on a par with the President either. Wesleyan students, when asked if they would have reacted the same way to the deaths of other prominent political leaders, answered that the murder of a President was neither just a personal nor just a political loss, but "something in itself:"

> Interviewer: Ask yourself, what if this had been Johnson, or Warren, or Stevenson? Would classes have stopped? What would your reaction be?
> Student 1: I don't think it would be the same.
> Student 2: No, because the President has been shot. The President of the United States has just been murdered. That's something in itself.
> Student 3: I think it's just because the act of shooting the President is not only an act against a person, it's sort of an act against the office of the Presidency.[3]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 413.

[2] Greenstein, "Private Disorder and Public Order," p. 264.

[3] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 235.

"The murder of the President is no ordinary homicide," Freedman asserts. "The impact of the murder of the key figure of government is so vast, so terrible, so widespread, that it is incomparable to the murder of a private citizen. We are agitated and depressed at even the remotest prospect that our elected leader may be killed while in office."[1]

We must conclude that Kennedy was not an ordinary friend to millions nor was his an ordinary death. After all, people did not get to know Kennedy because of his personality, but it was "the very fact that Kennedy was the President that made his personal as well as his public life so well known."[2] Most people were not really friends with John Kennedy, but it was his position as President and the way he wore it that made him a "friend" in a non-ordinary sense; except for a very select few, in losing Kennedy, people had lost not a friend who became President but a President who became a friend. "Although Kennedy's personality and the suddenness of his death were important components of the response, his status as incumbent President was necessary," Greenstein tells us, "to evoke the intense feelings."[3] Personal factors can exascerbate grief but are not basic to it.[4]

History bears this out. Reactions to previous presidential deaths was by no means commensurate with what one would have expected on the basis of personal characteristics.[5] The intense outpouring of grief at the deaths in office of previous Presidents, whether by violent or natural means and regardless of their political effectiveness or personal character, suggests that it is the office of the Presidency itself and its symbolic importance

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[1] Kirkham, Assassination, p. 356, based on the work of a Dr. Freedman.

[2] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 356.

[3] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 234.

[4] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 355. [5] Ibid.

XUM

which triggers the intense grief. For example, after the assassination of William McKinley, who today is generally regarded as a rather mediocre President, it was written:

> A universal spasm of grief passed from end to end of the land. From far eastern Maine to the western land of gold, from the great lakes of the north to the great gulf of the south, the sentiment of deep grief, the feeling of intense sadness, filled every soul. Never was a man more deeply and widely mourned, not even the sainted Lincoln, nor the warmly esteemed Garfield. . . . The whole nation swung downward into the vale of grief, only slowly to rise again under the force of that dread blow.[1]

Even the natural death of the scandal-racked Harding was greeted as a calamity which blotted out political considerations, was hailed as a giving of his life for his country, and was compared with Moses dying before he reached the Promised Land.[2]

Like his predecessors, Kennedy could be mourned simultaneously in terms of the "loss of a loved one by all citizens," not because he was a personal friend to all Americans, but "because as President he served as the object of much of the emotional component of love of country;"[3] people loved their country through him and grieved for their country as he had led it, represented it, protected it, and inspired it in grieving for his loss. "It was something of such great significance," said a Minneapolis resident, "not just the loss of a person, but the symbolic office of the presidency."[4]

There was an unusual amount of concern for a political figure in responses to the Kennedy assassination, but the level of "political concern" was no more ordinary than the popular "friendship" espoused. I do not believe that the great increase in political attention represented a sudden politicization of the American people, whom opinion polls have shown to be little interested in or knowledgeable about the stuff of politics, but rather the surfacing of a deep-seated concern for the political order and for the pivotal role of the President in it. Rather like health, about which people do not tend to be actively concerned until it is threatened, people tend to take the day-to-day operations of politics for granted--indeed partly out of their confidence in the President being in charge--and not to convert their latent care into active concern until the political order is threatened.[1] In other words, people do not tend to become gravely concerned with either health or politics until they confront them at a religious level, i.e., at a superordinate level which transcends the problems of everyday hygiene and politics and confronts them, in the health area, with the mysteries of unfulfillment, suffering, and death, and in the political arena, with the trauma of the possible collapse of the political order. Generally, crises are decisive for societies, place in relief the institutions upon which society is based, and bring to the surface the strong emotions and deep commitments undergirding them.[2] In particular, an assassination especially accentuates the role of the President as a personage that people are involved with not merely personally as a man nor only politically as a functionary but also as a symbolic figure central to the social order and affecting the very constitution of the self. Delving into the phenomena "covered" by the "personal" idiom, Greenstein asserts, "Clearly something about the President's symbolic position and the public's repeated exposure to him leads people to incorporate him into their private worlds, into their selves." And moving beyond the "personal" realm, he asserts, "For most people something more than private loss was felt. The death of the President was profoundly disturbing because it was a major fissure in the social order."[1] "Over and beyond emotions of sympathy or pragmatic political concerns," assert Berger and Luckmann with particular reference to the Kennedy assassination, "the death of a king by sudden violence brings the terror of chaos to conscious proximity."[2]

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[1] A contemporary newspaper account cited by Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 169.

[2] Ibid., p. 170.

[3] Norman M. Bradburn and Jacob J. Feldman, "Public Apathy and Public Grief," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 286.

[4] Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 140.

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[1] Bradburn, "Public Apathy," pp. 273, 285; Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 239, and "Private Disorders and Public Order," p. 263.

[2] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 349.

Down the centuries, the death of a sacred king, and especially his murder, has been a cataclysmic event. In some cases, such as Fraser's celebrated description of the king of the wood who guards the golden bough at Nemi, the person who kills the sacred king automatically and immediately succeeds him.[3] In other cases, it is believed that the heavens are empty and earth desolate after a sacred king dies until a successor is found and crowned, and, in some of these cases, a dying king!s last breath is caught in a bag so that his potency will not be lost but can be passed on to his successor.[4] Even in ordinary circumstances the transfer of power is a sacred time, fraught with danger, but when that transfer begins with the death of a ruler, it is much the more so, and when death comes by murder, it is so all the more. Any assassination or assassination attempt arouses primitive sympathies and fears of lawlessness; Novak writes:

> A leader whose blood flows wantonly upon the earth has tapped the mystic bond between him and his fellows. The fragility of the common

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[1] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 239.

[2] Berger, Social Construction, p. 95. The death of the ruler who keeps the sacred heritage threatens the legitimation which religion provides to cover over the precarious social order.

[3] Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough, (New York: MacMillan, 1922), p. 1.

[4] Ibid., p. 343.

> life erupts in him. The sight of a bold, energetic man--bleeding, prone, pale, his crimson blood in widening circles on the ground--attacks the stomach, awakens sympathies the mind may not admit, molecules of our blood crying out to his.[1]

But the murder of a king brings special fear. Perhaps, the potency which was the king's will pass away with him; perhaps, no one will succeed him; perhaps, the political order will fall apart; perhaps, strife will reign. Anxiety over succession is compounded by fear of impotence, by dread at the potential collapse of the political-cosmic order, and by terror at the invasion of chaos.

Although most Americans do not consciously entertain myths of the cosmic importance of the sacred king nor of the destitution which his death brings, especially in their official historic-modern ideology, they are aware of these themes in poems and plays, in children's stories and legends, in their own childhood dreams of magical fathers present and taken away, in the findings of psychoanalysis, and, if Jungian analysis is to be credited, in their own dealings with archetypal figures that they share with the rest of mankind in a collective unconscious.[2] And while Americans do not ordinarily apply these themes directly and consciously to the everyday life of their President, there must be enough latent mythologization of the President as sacred king to make its emergence at his death comprehensible.[3] We have attempted to analyze the American presidential myth, which colors the lives as well as the deaths of Presidents, in terms of the image of kingship and its component symbolic roles, observing that a limited historic kingship is possible within it and receives the greatest legitimation from America's official heritage but judging it to be developing, especially in Kennedy's case, more along the lines of archaic sacred kingship. In the extraordinary crisis of the Kennedy assassination, the overwhelming deluge of shock and grief, though often expressed in a personal idiom, is itself mute testimony to the great symbolic importance of a presidential kingship felt to be predominantly sacred.

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 229.

[2] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 348; Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. xiv, 217.

[3] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 193.

Although the President's "personality" is not crucial to the reaction which his assassination evokes, his humanity, toward which his personality points, is central to it. Alive and dead, a President is both immanent and transcendent. "Like the medieval king," to quote Verba again, "the President is a concrete human individual whom one can see, on whom one can focus attention, and with whom one can share common human emotions, and yet he is something transcending his concrete human aspects, for he is also the symbol of the nation."[1] While alive, the President's immanence is obvious and his transcendence more shadowy, but death makes his "otherworldly" status and access to the divine clearer than his worldly presence and availability to men, and the desire to preserve his humanity motivates people to express their more-than-personal loss in the idiom of personal grief in order to enable the President to continue to be for them a concrete mundane link to a symbolic universe.[2] Like other mediators figures--Jesus Christ as God incarnate (or God in the form of man) or Mary as more solidly human though now Queen of Heaven or the pope as the vicar of Christ on earth or saints as the historical or current embodiment of the way of Christ--who are believed to make the gods, spirits, grace, and principles of the heavenly realm available to earthlings, the President gives the people something to latch onto--and they grasp all the harder when death threatens to take him away--in their quest for ideal patriotism, serving, like a sacrament, as the outward and visible form through which the inward and spiritual grace of America's sacred heritage is communicated. The imaging of the divine is officially a good deal more transcendent in historic Catholicism than the localization of the divine in the nation in archaic nationalism, but the process of mediation is essentially the same. The death of a President intensifies his mediator role. As with Christ as priest, Kennedy not only performs the priestly functions while alive but is himself the sacrifice, his prior priestly role making the martyr motif in his myth come easily;[1] Kennedy sacramentally, i.e., symbolically, communicates America's sacred heritage until he becomes, in death, a part of it. Death also crystallizes him as America's representative and accentuates his fatherly goodness and his strong leadership abilities. But as with Jesus' disciples, a long and painful process, sometimes dipping into the slough of despair, intervenes between the mediator's tragic death and his full apotheosis, a process which, in Kennedy's case, lingered in varying states of completeness and drew competition from the need to transfer loyalty to the next President as the new sacred king.[2]

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 351.

[2] See Berger, Social Construction, p. 95, especially for an exposition of my borrowed terms "mundane link" and "symbolic universe."

The ritual drama of politics, over which the President--as sacred king in roles of high priest, representative, father, and imperator--presides, enacts in human form that people can grasp the conflict between the principalities and powers of the universe and concretely dramatizes the abstract forces of domestic and international politics. When the curtain falls abruptly on that drama, the people are left with the question of who will continue to inspire them, represent them, protect them, and lead them. The last question is the most easily resolved. The Constitution specifies that the Vice President will immediately take over the powers and duties of the presidency when the previous incumbent is struck down, yet the people cannot let him succeed, especially in his more symbolic roles, until they have finished losing the old President and mythologized in more final form whatever of him they still need. Only when this essentially archaic process is virtually complete, sometimes accompanied by historic beliefs, are the people ready to go on with the modern business of government.

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[1] For memorialization of Kennedy as martyr, see Cahpter VIII, #6.

[2] See Chapter IX. I see a similarity in Pope Paul VI being the new vicar of Christ, but much loyalty remaining with Pope John XXIII, especially among non-Catholics.

B. Loss of Imperator

Although the practical duties involved in the imperator role make it the least symbolic among the President's roles as king and the most easily taken over by another, for the bulk of the population, Lyndon Johnson's succession involved not only the transfer of power between two "interchangeable" functionaries, but also the divestment from the old President and the re-investment onto the new President of the "charisma of office" which legitimates the use of that power and gives even to the imperator role a religious dimension.[1] Despite the Constitutionally mandated instant transfer of power and rapid disclosure through the news media of Johnson's having been ceremonially invested with the right to that power by taking the oath of office within two hours of Kennedy's death, most people had some difficulty in letting go of Kennedy as President and in according to Johnson so abruptly the mantle of leadership.[2]

The transfer of power was accompanied by a variety of fears. In a national survey conducted in 1968, 61 per cent of the respondents reported having felt afraid at the time of Kennedy's assassination, with the figure rising to almost 70 per cent among females, those under 30, and suburbanites; only 17 per cent reported no fear.[1] People expressed fears of being leaderless, of unstable succession, and of untoward political consequences.

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[1] See Chapter III, #4, above

[2] See Chapter IX, #3, below.

Although it was a "very deepest feeling" for only a few, 41 per cent in the National Opinion Research Center survey reported worrying some about "how the United States would carry on without its leader."[2] Among children, the figure was considerably higher, increasing in pro-Kennedy segments and in younger children: 59 per cent of the Detroit schoolchildren in Sigel's survey reported worry about how the United States would carry on without its leader, a figure rising to 66 per cent among Democratic children, to 70 per cent in the Negro subsample, and to 76 per cent among fourth graders. An overwhelming majority of these children--84 per cent--expressed faith that the government goes on just the same when there is an assassination, but 33 per cent of the youngest group, fourth graders, believed that there is _no_ government for a while. Interestingly, the President's inability to prevent his own assassination led to a reduction in the omnipotence with which previous studies indicated children endowed the presidency while his benevolence was more highly rated.[3]

Some worried about the possibility of a revolving-door succession to the presidency. Watching John McCormack and Carl Hayden hobble in to pay their respects to the dead Kennedy at the White House East Room, some people worried about the advanced age of these potential successors to the presidency should Lyndon Johnson, who had suffered a heart attack, die in office.[1]

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[1] Kirkham, _Assassination_, p. 102.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 156.

[3] Sigel, "School Children's Reactions," pp. 52, 58, 60-62.

Many, however, were worried not about the stability of presidential leadership, but about a change in its character in the process of Johnson replacing Kennedy. In the NORC survey, 47 per cent worried about how Kennedy's death would affect the political situation in this country though this was "a very deepest feeling" for only 20 per cent.[2] People who pinned their political hopes on Kennedy had to go through [illegible] organizing experience of abandoning the habits and expectations that were associated with him. This was particularly hard on the generation of students who attained political maturity in the 1960 election and saw Kennedy's presidency as the only route to the realization of their political ideals and on Negroes who saw him as a unique civil rights champion and feared that his death would have negative consequences for that movement. Negroes were also more worried about the international situation, about how the country would fare without its leader, and about their own lives, jobs, and futures as a result of Kennedy's death and, more precisely, I would suggest, because a leader they trusted was no longer exercising the powers of the Presidency.[3] "Let's see what your cracker President is going to do for you now," said a Harlem bartender to his fellow black clientelle in assessing Johnson.[4]

Fear of international consequences was significant but not large. In the NORC survey, 44 per cent worried about how Kennedy's death would affect our relations with other countries.[5] One teenager feared that the

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[1] U.P.I. Four Days, p. 54; Murray, Legacy of an Assassination, p. 50.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 156.

[3] Ibid.; Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. xvii, 207, 214; Bradburn, "Public Apathy," pp. 276, 281.

[4] A.P.. Torch Is Passed, p. 51.

[5] Sheatsley, National Survey," p. 156.

the assassination would lead to another war; another child asked if the peace corps would go on; a relative in New York City received a letter from Sean O'Casey mourning the loss of hope for peace, a response more typical of foreign than American reactions.[1] But these fear reactions seemed to be scattered reactions, more in the nature of passing thoughts than anything one would talk up and mobilize around for immediate action. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff put every American military base in the world on alert, the fear of any kind of foreign or domestic conspiracy which was attempting to thwart American constitutional processes was slight at first though it grew more later more as an explanation than as a felt threat.[2]

Despite a few misgivings and a little time needed to adjust to it, the powers and the legitimacy bound up in the imperator role were transferred to Lyndon Johnson fairly easily and with no actual diminution, and the scaling down of presidential omnipotence resulted in a more realistic appraisal of the President's power among children, which is commendable from a modern point of view. The smoothness of Johnson's succession, the degree to which he was of the same political stripe as Kennedy or soon took on those colors, and the calmness of the world situation left little room for concern about the political consequences of the assassination at a modern level among most Americans. The relative absence of fear was rooted both in lack of reasons for fear and in pre-occupation with other than practical aspects of the assassination. Even when expressed in a practical idiom, most fears seemed to lack specificity and were not taken seriously,

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[1] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," p. 9; Manchester, Death, p. 446; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 138. See Chapter VIII, #1 (world reactions).

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 193. See Chapter VIII, #4.

XUM

suggesting that they were masks for a deeper anxiety at a more archaic level. Much of the worry seems not to have been directed toward actual concrete dangers nor bound up with actual dashed hopes resulting from Kennedy's no longer exercising the powers of government as imperator, but may rather have reflected a more generalized feeling of insecurity and apprehension, which we might call a feeling of "fatherlessness."

C. Loss of Father It is clear that a great many people experienced Kennedy's death as the loss of a protective, caring, and perhaps dominant figure (a symbolic ideal father). It is also clear that a great many people got in touch with their feelings about previous losses, by death or otherwise, of a great variety of persons, including some actual fathers, in connection with their grief over Kennedy's death. Beyond that, there is much dispute, mostly between Freudians, who speak rather loosely of losing one's father in losing a President, and other social scientists, who tend to overreact to such loose talk. I want to take a median position. I want to make a case for Kennedy's death as the loss of a king in the symbolic role of father (among other roles), judiciously using Freudians as allies, and I want to acknowledge with other social scientists the variety of personal losses, not necessarily of fathers, associated with Kennedy's loss.

I begin with the latter acknowledgment. According to Wolfenstein, in mourning for President Kennedy, many people probably released feelings for past griefs incompletely expressed before though they were not necessarily aware of the linkage. In our culture it is generally felt to be reprehensible to complain or ddemonstrate distress about personal suffering, and we tend to ward off awareness of death, to curtail funeral ritual, and to minimize or eliminate formal mourning observances; we are to keep a stiff upper lip, as even the newspapers in praising Mrs. Kennedy's tearless-

XUM

ness and popular allusions to her bravery testify. However, mourning for a lost President could be seen more as a sympathetic than a personal response, was easier since giving up a remote object is not intolerable though painful, and was encouraged by the multitude of others also mourning, resulting in a release of the customary inhibitions against weeping (though children continued to feel somewhat inhibited in the presence of adults). Thus, if Wolfenstein is correct, many who said they felt like they had lost a member of their own family were indeed feeling again the loss of an actual family member disguised within their mourning for President Kennedy, with the disguise allowing them to complete the mourning for their own dead loved one without finally acknowledging his loss. "If one weeps by substitution for a remote object," Wolfenstein writes, "one finds release for pent-up feelings, and at the same time one can go on covertly denying the loss of the person whom one cannot bear to give up."[1]

For some, however, the disguise came loose, and they experienced the loss of Kennedy less as an unconscious analogy to, and more as a direct reliving, of their own loss. In several cases, the lost loved ones were fathers. "It was as though my father had died all over again," one Negro high school girl wrote.[2] "I had the luxury of grief I couldn't express for my own father," one of David Kirschner's patients told him. Another said, "I told my husband I released more tears for President Kennedy than when Poppa died. The tears were for my father. I buried Poppa again."[3] Yet none of these people liken Kennedy to their fathers or tell us anything about their view of him; they merely observe that Kennedy's death provided

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. xvi, 81.

[2] Roberta S. Sigel, "Television and the Reactions of Schoolchildren to the Assassination," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 211.

[3] David Kirschner cited by Greenstein, "Private Disorder and Public Order," p. 269.

XUM

them with an occasion to express a grief of a different sort. Others among Kirschner's patients, far from making Kennedy over on the image of their own fathers, criticize their fathers in comparison to Kennedy as an ideal, mythic father. Kennedy "represented to me the things I always wanted my own father to be--a great intellect, forceful; a person of dignity who commanded the respect and esteem of others," said one while another, after describing her own father in the blackest terms, felt Kennedy's loss as the "loss of a heroic figure--a shiney knight on a white charger."[1]

Ginsparg gives examples of several different kinds of losses which were associated with the loss of Kennedy. One teenage girl, whose parents had recently been divorced, "felt as if a living part of me had died" when Kennedy was lost as well. Another girl, whose mother works full-time and was relatively unavailable, unmasked the comfortable air she usually wore and showed personal loss when Kennedy died, while a third, who had recently lost friends through the process of moving, mourned them in mourning Kennedy.[2] It seems that just about any kind of loss could be disguised, accentuated, compounded, or expressed in mourning for Kennedy without any essential relationship between the two objects of loss. It is certainly not the case that everyone missed Kennedy like a human father, a contention which would be fairly ridiculous for those older than Kennedy; the choice of familial identifications depended a good deal on relative age:

> The father image inherited from the Eisenhower presidency appears to be only one aspect of the response to Kennedy. In his middle forties, he could be perceived from several angles. . . . The many family roles in which Kennedy was known--son, husband, father, and brother--permitted a wide range of familial identifications.[3]

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[1] David Kirschner, cited by Greenstein, "Private Disorder and Public Order," p. 269.

[2] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," p. 12.

[3] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 115.

Especially with his youth image that belied his years, Kennedy contrasts sharply with the paternal image that Eisenhower cultivated. "It is more difficult to picture the youthful, fun-loving Kennedys serving in loco parentis than it was the Roosevelts and Eisenhowers," assert Sheatsley and Feldman in opposition to the Freudian line, as they opt for highlighting Kennedy's representative role instead.[1] Nevertheless, despite his youth image and independent of relative ages--and quite apart from whether one re-experienced the loss of a human father or any personal loss--I believe a case can be made for Kennedy's death being experienced as a loss of a symbolic father.

The imagery with which the loss of such a symbolic father is depicted varies a good deal with age. For young children, President and father are very similar and both are idealized. There is no special difficulty in conceiving of young children, with some attachment to Kennedy, feeling his loss with the same kind of separation anxiety that they would feel about the loss of their own parents. Their greater dependency needs, directed to governmental authority through the President rather than through political institutions or principles, leaves children feeling more bereft, helpless, and worried than others when the President is taken.[2] Younger adolescents are better able to distinguish the President's "fatherhood" from that of their own less idealized parents though the fourteen-year-old girl who felt impelled to write "President Kennedy was not my father" indicates that the distinction may be hard-won and that the "analogy" still has much force.[3] Wolfenstein has argued persuasively that young adolescents in losing Kennedy gave up not a father figure identical with their actual parents but an ideal father conceived in childhood; indeed, his loss may have speeded up that process. She writes:

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 171.

[2] Sigel, "School Children's Reactions," p. 58.

[3] Wolfenstein, "Death of Parent and President," p. 78.

> The problem of giving up a loved and admired leader coincided with the basic unresolved task of their time in life, that of giving up their childhood attachment to their parents. . . . The sudden death of the President provided the occasion for experiencing in an exceptionally dramatic and concentrated way some of the feelings of loss, and having to give up the elders to whom they have been attached, that more usually go on and on in a diffuse, muddled, chronic, and episodic way over many years. Though giving up the primary love objects, the parents, could still be postponed, some of the grief for the gradual loss of their parents in growing up could be expressed toward this ideal and remote personage. For those who had been able to displace important feelings to the President, he was more an ideal person, corresponding to the way in which parents used to be regarded in early childhood. . . . Their grief for the President corresponded to their more diffuse feelings for the loss of the ideal image of their parents in earlier childhood.[1]

In keeping with their stage of development, older adolescent boys and girls were more likely to see Kennedy as an ego ideal or love object rather than a parental figure, and adults, who are "all grown up" and "on their own," we might presume, would have no need of a parental President. But the evidence, as we noted,[2] suggests otherwise. The rendering unconscious of the primitive, childish bond to the President as symbolic father does not extinguish it as it remains residually present at most times and is activated in crises, when a degree of regression is common. Greenstein sees a curious paradox lurking in the statistics about somatic anxiety symptoms in response to the Cuban missile crisis compared to those in reaction to the Kennedy assassination, both of which testify to the President's importance as symbolic father for adults. If practical modern fears were involved, we would expect the Cuban missile crisis to breed more anxiety than the Kennedy assassination. But the reverse is true. The Cuban missile crisis, which brought the nation and world to the edge of a nuclear abyss, while it induced the people to rally around the President and put their confidence in him as father, caused no nationwide increase in somatic anxiety symptoms while the Kennedy assassination, in which only one official was killed and replaced the same day with no external danger, provoked an increase in anxiety symptoms, which, though not as widespread as the increase in grief symptoms, was nonetheless considerable.[1] Apparently, a symbolic crisis at a global level, where the political order as a whole is threatened by the loss of father, tends to be felt as more threatening than a real crisis of a particular sort, where actual danger pertains.

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[1] Wolfenstein, "Death of Parent and President," pp. 87, 83-84.

[2] See Chapter III, #3, above.

Wolfenstein also interprets the anxiety accompanying the Kennedy assassination as a loss of father:

> Anxiety and apprehension of other bad things happening were widespread. Generally, those who have experienced a sudden disaster become fearful that it will be repeated. This apprehension has no realistic relation to the future. It is rather a continuing reverberation of the disaster already undergone, which has not yet been assimilated. Also, deep-seated, often unconscious beliefs in benevolent, protective powers keeping us safe from harm are seriously shaken. The apprehensiveness occasioned by a disaster . . . may at first be without definite object. Then it attaches itself to more specific dangers. Following the assassination, young children frequently expressed the fear that the assassin might be lurking in their neighborhood. This sinister figure became condensed with the attacker in the night who had already haunted their fantasies. Other young children, most impressed with the fact that the father of children like themselves had died, became anxious about separation from their parents or fearful that something might happen to them. Many adults, as we know, expressed apprehension about bad things happening to our country, or the outbreak of another war. We might say that the President, as a good father figure, was trusted to keep aggression under control. The fact that he himself was killed showed that he was unable to do this; hence the fear of the outbreak of aggressive acts, whether the child's fear of the lurking assassin or the adults' apprehension of a nuclear war.[2]

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[1] Citing a Bradburn and Caplovitz study, Greenstein asserts: "At the time of the . . . Cuban missile crisis comparable research showed no increase in these somatic symptoms; "Private Disorder and Public Order," p. 265.

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 22.

Several poets also sensed in Kennedy's death the release of chaos, both without and within, which he had kept at bay; among them, Roy Fuller, comes to a fresh awareness of our vulnerability, recognizing that crimes like the assassination "Is what for us he had the power to postpone / Who now approach the assassin's range alone."[1] The television show "That Was The Week That Was" spoke of Kennedy "keeping everything on the rails," a gift once taken for granted but now seen as precarious and viewed with hindsight as a "miraculous present."[2] Likewise, some New England kitchen helpers looked to the President to meet their "basic needs for sustenance and protection, viewing him as at once kind and strong," characteristic of the "benevolent leader" or of the good father or, in the Biblical heritage, of the shepherd king.[3] The murder of such a leader, call him father or not, is earth-shaking. Having personified the President as the "Nation's guardian, . . . empowered to watch over the nation," Americans felt highly insecure when this "reassuring symbol of social stability" was taken from them, creating a "major fissure in the social order" which was "profoundly disturbing."[4]

Freudian theory develops a much more elaborate view of the President as father and of his assassination as parricide, based on the primal horde and Oedipus myths. In brief, the myth of the primal horde depicts a "pre-historic time" (better understood as mythic time, or "everywhen") in which sons banded together to overthrow their protective but tyrannical father, killed him in an archetypal crime of parricide, took over the women he had monopolized, and "ate" him in order to gain his power and to obediently maintain the order which he had established. Similarly, in the Oedipus myth, a man unwittingly breaks the two strongest taboos by killing his father and marrying his mother.

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[1] Roy Fuller, "From a Foreign Land," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 76.

[2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 66.

[3] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 118.

[4] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 239.

The Freudian theory is able to explain many of the unusual phenomena in the responses to the Kennedy assassination. The overwhelming character of the reaction is seen as rooted in perception of the assassination as the "archetypal crime" of parricide (Freedman), generating horror at the violation of an awesome taboo and stirring feelings and fantasies from deeply repressed levels of the mind (Wolfenstein). The feeling of parricide also explains why people took the assassination as so personal a loss and why they tended to feel ashamed or guilty about it.[1] Being "bound to each other because of their common bond of ambiguous affection for, awe of, dependence upon, and challenge to, the common father figure" helps to account for the unusual degree of unity felt during the assassination weekend.[2] The feelings of ambivalence toward the father makes more credible the feelings of relief covertly intermingled with those of disturbance over the loss of a domineering as well as protective and caring father in Kennedy's death, a factor which may have influenced his assassin.[3] The need to join together in ceremonies to purge impure emotions through catharsis reveals the profanation which the crime brought and the need to be "absolved" before reentry into the "sacred brotherhood," and conspiracy theories likewise functioned to assuage the "primal anxieties" raised by the assassination and to shift the blame onto others.[4] The excessive attention paid to Mrs.

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[1] See #A, above, and #E, below.

[2] Dr. Freedman in Assassination, p. 93. See #3A, below.

[3] See #1A, above, and #E, below.

[4] See #3E and Chapter VIII, #4, below.

Kennedy fits in with the Freudian theory that the father's widow is both desired and taboo resulting in an obsession.[1] Finally, the contention that the President as father is responsible for maintaining order helps to account for the feelings of anxiety, disorder, and vulnerability which his assassination evoked, and "posthumous obedience" in an attempt to restore that order so foully broken is seen to lie behind the subsequent enactment of Kennedy's legislative program and the search for a faithful successor.[2]

There is no need here for a full evaluation of the Freudian theory. It is clearly too illuminating to be discarded and to overweening to be accepted in its entirety. Like any complete theory, it both explains a good deal, lending plausible interpretations to a wide range of seemingly unrelated data, and explains too much, knowing in advance what to expect and finding it whether there is evidence or not. My own tendency is to be eclectic without being wholly random in the realm of theory. I am able to hold several theories or myths at once, seeing one as more illuminating than another at different points and none as without drawbacks.[3] I definitely reject Freudian claims to exclusive truth and to fatherhood as the Freudian theory defines it as the only significant symbolic role of the presidency. But my own theory of presidential kingship in life and death can make use of the Freudian theory, giving a degree of credence where it seems to adequately account for the facts and reserving judgment where it seems more far-fetched; in general, I have found the writings of Wolfenstein and Greenstein, for example, who make critical use of Freudian theory in connection with a selective use of clinical and interview findings, more useful than the summary of Freedman's observations, which consists of a a wholesale application of orthodox Freudian theory to the Kennedy assassination. In particular, in terms of our present focus on the loss of father, I see the loss of a protective, caring, order-keeping father underlying the widespread generalized anxiety response to the Kennedy assassination, but I do not see people consciously imaging the Kennedy assassination as the death or murder of their own human fathers as a common response. More generally, I concur with the Freudian notion that the presidential assassination was experienced primarily in an archaic rather than an historic or modern frame, evoking feelings and fantasies reaching down to the totem-and-taboo level, as Wolfenstein puts it, and I am intrigued by the ability of Freudian theory and myth to speak to that level; I am convinced that there are dimensions of the assassination which cannot be tapped without the use of mythic language. Nevertheless, since so much is seen to transpire at a largely "unconscious" level, I tend to use clinical findings and generalizations sparingly, not always sure how much to discount "clinical" or "theoretical" bias and how much to believe.[1]

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[1] See Chapter VIII, #3.

[2] See the current section, above, and Chapter IX, #3, 4-6, below.

[3] For "symbolic realism," following Bellah and Fingarette, see Introduction, #1, above.

D. Loss of Representative Deeper than the loss of the President as an external protective father was the loss of the President as an ego ideal, perhaps itself an outgrowth of identification with an ideal father but taking on the colors of identification with an exemplary heroic representative who does not stand over you parentally but lures you into his life as peer or model. Identifying with the President, whether by likening oneself to him or by looking up to him, blurs the distinction between President and self and makes his death seem more of a threat to one's self. Especially when people use the President to make up for their own deficiencies,[1] such as is the case with lower class adults and even more with adolescents, who engage their emotions with a "whole range of glamorous figures, heroes, and idols" in the process of giving up their parents,[2] the death of a President can be an overwhelming loss.

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[1] Clinicians' bias toward finding what they are trained to find and Freudian imposition of theory is far from unique; training and theory are always both biasing and indispensable, needed and needing to be taken into account. For ways in which psychoanalysts can apply more rigorous standards to their work to make it more palatable to non-Freudian social scientists, see Greenstein, "Private Disorder and Public Order."

Barber has found lower class adults using the President as an ego ideal, first tailoring his image to fit their own particular needs and then seeking to measure up to him in such basic matters as family, character, and religion. Said an elderly kitchen helper, interviewed shortly after the assassination; in regard to the First Family:

> If a man and a woman stick together like those two people, I think it's not necessary to live like this--one hating the other. Just example from them--the people got to realize we got a man and a wife in the White House. They're supposed to follow that, too. They'll be no argument, they'll be no this nor nothing--just pleasant life for everybody. But nobody think about that. They think to be mean to one another. But if they watch that family, wherever they went or wherever they go to trip, to pleasure--everybody likes them.[3]

People also took Kennedy's character as a model, e.g., his directness of speech, his courage, and his diligence at work, and one nurse concluded, "It seems everybody made him their ideal."[4] For these people, the wide exposure to Kennedy and his family through the media had not only acquainted them with intimate details of his life (and perhaps his political position) but had also led them to incorporate him within themselves as a model; the swiftness of his death was quite a jolt which set them loose from their moorings. "A piece of each of us died at that moment" when the coffin lid was closed on the Kennedy we had known as a man of laughter, wit, and life and as father and husband, said Mike Mansfield in his eulogy. "We knew his vigorous tread, his flashing smile, his ready wit, his keen mind, his zest for adventure," said Everett Dirksen in another eulogy. "One moment there is the ecstasy of living . . . and then the sudden strangling death rattle of dissolution."[1] All the alchemy of Kennedy's finding his place in America's heart was instantly and magically reversed when all the golden, sunny moments with Kennedy, on which an adoring public had come to depend for satisfaction, were brought to an abrupt end by an assassin's lead bullets. A college student commented:

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[1] See Sidney Hook, The Hero in History, cited by Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 171, and in Chapter III, #2, above.

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. xxxv.

[3] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 115.

[4] Ibid., p. 117.

> Then you see him walking back in the way he walks with that sort of jaunty look back over his shoulder, smiling and waving to everyone, just obviously loving the public, obviously loving being out in it. . . . You see the Kennedy that has become a fixture in this country. . . . Then, all of a sudden, boom, he's gone.[2]

Kennedy's being torn away from them when they still needed him left many people with an overwhelming sense of loss. "The evidence suggests," says Barber, "that the profound sense of bewilderment and grief was one result of the sudden shattering of personal bonds with an important ego ideal."[3]

Unlike Kennedy's personality, character, and family life, his religion was not exemplary or representative for most Americans. For some Catholics, it was, and they tended to find more significance both in Kennedy's election and in his death (as revealed by their finding it harder to believe it really happened); in the face of Catholics having been "politically underprivileged and chafing against the unwritten rule against Catholics in high office," Pratt asserts, "Kennedy's election must have been a vicarious personal achievement for many Catholics, an increase in the status of the self--with his murder becoming, in a corresponding degree, the murder of a part of the self."[1] For most Protestants and others, Kennedy's Catholicism needed to be discounted and set against his good qualities lest it detract from his being America's representative. In the face of that prevailing attitude and of Kennedy's own declaration of the irrelevance of religion to public life, even Catholics tended to soft-pedal any religious identification with Kennedy, especially in public. In interviewing both Catholics and Protestants upset by Kennedy's death, Barber found that Kennedy's religion was sidelined either by being minimized as a private matter that did not interfere with (and maybe didn't even affect) his state duties or by being generalized as a peculiar form of a universal religiousness akin to goodness with which all Americans could identify. From Barber, I quote first the remarks of an Italian Catholic kitchen helper, then the remarks of a Negro Protestant laundry worker, and finally his own analysis:

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[1] For texts of Mike Manfield's and Everett Dirksen's eulogies, see U.P.I., Four Days, p. 130.

[2] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 234.

[3] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 118.

> On the Catholic part--was not interfere with his duty as the White House. Catholic, you know--it was first with him the Catholic religion, but he was keeping aside to the duty of the White House. Religion come after, for the family and the kids.
>
> At first, people were against President Kennedy because he were a Catholic. But he was so good and everyone has shown a feeling and expressed their feeling toward him. Everyone, mostly, I've talked with about how they feel about Kennedy, you don't hear them say, "Well, he was a Catholic and I don't like him because he was a Catholic." They are very upset just about the shock of his death, that he was such a wonderful man. But his religion, regardless, if he is a good man, what type of religion he like . . . it's just only one God.
>
> It appears that Kennedy's expressed position on his religious convictions and their relation to his official duties got through to these two people. Both are able to maintain a relatively elaborate identification with the President as a Catholic and, more generally, as a religious man, while agreeing with his church-state position. For the first respondent, the dissonance is resolved by compartmentalization: Kennedy's religion was for Sunday and his family, and was kept separate from his White House work. The second respondent manages the problem by referring it to a higher unity: the President's belief in the one God of all. The fact that a religious identification can be maintained in the face of considerable complexity testifies to its strength and significance.[2]

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[1] Pratt, "Patterns of Closure," p. 185.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 116.

Thus by adjusting Kennedy's religion to fit their own needs for a religious representative and adding it to their use of him as a model in the areas of family and charcter, people were able to "look up" to Kennedy as head of the nation and exemplar of their American identity, andfthey felt personally "let down" when he was struck down and they were forced to look for another.

Going through the disorganizing process of learning to live without your hero can be a painful experience, and searching for a new ego ideal can be traumatic. The new President, though he succeeds immediately to power, does not automatically fit the bill. Lyndon Johnson--Texan, rural, Protestant, down home, older--was very different from the urbane, sophisticated, cool, Catholic, young Kennedy. Some felt that Johnson could not represent them, at least not inwardly, as they continued to be pre-occupied with the loss of their previous representative. Among Kennedy's aides, Schlesinger's experience was global: "Nothing will ever be the same again."[1] McNamara was more selective; though he showed no difficulty in relating to Johnson in his role as imperator, he did miss Kennedy as representative:

> Nothing will be quite the same with him gone. Among other things, he reached the hearts of people around the world with a quality and a style and a sophistication which epitomized the age and the times. Lyndon Johnson won't be able to approximate it.[2]

Reflecting on the loss of youth, which many adults felt just as adolescents felt the loss of childhood, a correspondent wrote James Reston:

> I feel suddenly old without Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy in the White House. Not only by ability but by sheer verve and joy, the Kennedys imparted their youth to everyone and put a sheen on our life that made it more youthful than it was. Mr. Johnson now seems Gary Cooper as President--High Noon, the poker game, the easy walk and masculine smile. . . . All will be well, I feel sure, but it is August, not June.[3]

The magic, in other words, was gone. "For a while we felt the country was ours," said Norman Mailer. "Now it is theirs again."[4]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 566. [2] Ibid. p. 535.

[2] Reston, "What Was Killed Was the Promise," p. 230.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 937.

For adolescents who identified with Kennedy, his loss as representative was, if anything, more excruciating, since relations to an ego ideal are so crucial at that formative stage of development. Some were sad and wistful, some disappointed, some disillusioned. One teenager wrote: "I could not bear the thought of having someone take away the life of the heroic John Fitzgerald Kennedy. He was so living at first and then 'poof' he's dead. I was grief-stricken when I heard he was shot."[1] The inertia of Kennedy's death contrasted sharply with the liveliness of his life, and the scenes on television, both of the past and of the present, on that sad Saturday evoked nostalgic memories of the happy times which would be no more.[2] "While watching his aides and friends file in (to the White House)," said a thirteen-year-old boy, "I first realized that he wouldn't make another speech like he made in West Berlin or wouldn't be back to his family in Ireland every ten years as he promised nor would he address us in a television speech as Dear Fellow Americans."[3] Seeing Mrs. Kennedy on television in the process of grieving, seeing the White House they had "toured" with her and which had become identified with the vigour of the Kennedys as a place of such happy times, now draped in black and filled with "memory and melancholy," seeing Kennedy's rocking chair being carted away must have added graphically and poignantly to the grieving sympathy felt for the Kennedy family.[4] One junior high school student reported being "filled with remote sadness" when thinking about how "all the happiness of Kennedy's family was gone in a few horrible minutes."[1] Although there was a certain distance, there was also a degree of personal participation in Kennedy's tragedy, which might proleptically symbolize a recognition of their own limitations during the process of growing up. Of older adolescents, Wolfenstein writes:

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[1] Wolfenstein, "Death of Parent and President," p. 78.

[2] The contrast between Kennedy's coffin lumbering off the presidential jet and his usual sprightly descents was also noted tearfully on Friday night; White, Making President 1964, p. 21.

[3] Wolfenstein, "Death of Parent and President," p. 79.

[4] Cf. U.P.I., Four Days, p. 70; Manchester, Death, p. 43.

> The assassination meant the sudden tragic end of a career with which they were much identified. There was a young President to whom they had felt unusually close. They wanted him to suceed; they felt empathetic hurt in his fall. He would never achieve all that he had set out to do. Perhaps, in later years, when they think back on the high hopes of their youth, which for them, as for other generations, will be incompletely fulfilled, their nostalgic regrets for lost youth will be mingled with their feelings for their young President cut off in mid-career.[2]

For more politically-minded college students, Kennedy's death meant a dampening of their own political aspirations and a disappointment of their political hopes. Greenstein underlines their strong identification:

> For a number of students, their own interest in politics had been essentially coeval with Kennedy's campaign and presidency. Memories of Kennedy, his actions and rhetoric, his family, his humor and the humor about him, made up a large portion of the political worlds of these students. The 1960 election constituted a political coming to maturity for them. They were, in effect, a Kennedy generation. For many of them, Kennedy evidently was (whether or not they had consciously acknowledged it before his death) a reasonably heroic figure and exemplar. His youth, energy, intelligence, style, appearance, electric quality in his public performance, humor, and war record made Kennedy a compelling figure for admiration and emulation and led many students to identify with his activities and aspirations.[3]

"There was an aura about him," said one student, "something that someone my age could really identify with."[4] One student had invested special effort in seeing Kennedy succeed since he, too, was young and not a seasoned politician:

> Because of his age and everything, I always felt, you know, kind of pulling for him to do the right thing. He was young and maybe, although I had confidence in him and everything, it wasn't the deep confidence you might have in an older person, and you wanted him to do well and were kind of just pushing for him, or at least I felt that way.[5]

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 78. [2] Ibid., p. 233.

[3] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 239.

[4] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 208. [5] Ibid.

Another student who had despaired of finding such a man in the Eisenhower era was impressed with Kennedy's appearance, intellect, and emotional commitment to government service and had hoped to be like him someday:

> I was at a White House meeting for a bunch of guys who'd been working in Washington during the summer before last. We were all invited to the White House on a beautiful spring kind of day at the end of summer, and Kennedy came out and stood there upon a platform--there must have been thousands of us there--and, you know, it's just so amazing, he had this tan--he'd been in Washington quite a while as I understand--but he had this beautiful tan on and he started there speaking in the clipped way he has...about the need for people to go into government service, and then right out of the blue he says, quoting a historian out of something or other...he just quoted a paragraph, you know, just click, click... There weren't any uhs or buts and it was obvious that he was verbatim and then he went on in this tightly controlled sort of emotion saying, you know, we really need people in government and its a good life and our country needs it, and you got this idea of somebody who's completely dedicated himself to the service of his country, who feels very emotionally about service, and yet who controls and guides it through intellect. This is the kind of person we'd all despaired of, a lot of us had, during the Eisenhower Administration. This is the kind of guy whom we could identify with, who was as we hoped we might be some day. This really deepened the emotion, I think, feeling the identification.[1]

While even students who had opposed Kennedy politically recognized the strength of their personal attachment and fascination with him through his assassination, as representative of all America, those who also aligned with him politically, had been pushing for him, and wished to be like him were doubly disappointed. For them, "the brutal, sudden termination of Kennedy's life--particularly at a point at which few solid accomplishments for his administration could be shown--was disturbing in a profoundly personal way," Greenstein concludes.[2]

Other adolescents were more embittered. More than pity for a man killed or the loss of specifically political hopes, many youths rued the loss of a broader sense of promise that Kennedy had imparted to them. "I had an empty feeling," said one teenager, "like when you try to win and then lose."[1] When Kennedy lost, they lost. When, as it has now been set in myth, this "vibrant, youthful leader was cut down senselessly before his time, . . . he left a glamorous name, an engaging youthful time, . . . and a broken promise that the torch had been passed to a new generation." Now he, and they through him, were no longer in command, and "the youngsters who had identified with him felt cheated, as the promise, like the glamor, disappeared."[2] Kennedy, commented the Observer, had been a "herald" who "symbolized youth and intellectual adventure and made new prospects seem possible."[3] To the young, said Alistair Cooke on the B.B.C., Kennedy was a "symbol of what was possible with intelligence and will." With his death, "youth has been mocked," he continued, "cheated of the promise of what we had begun to call the Age of Kennedy."[4] Without Kennedy, youth were back in the old age without an heroic Contemporer to bring them into a new age. Losing Kennedy as representative meant going back to the world as it had been without the dream and the vision Kennedy had enunciated and embodied with which they were so heavily identified. "The loss of a figure so closely connected with their own development," concludes Greenstein, "was perhaps, to return to the image of Caesar, the most unkindest cut of all."[5]

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[1] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 208.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

As a human tragedy, Kennedy's death would have been a sad occasion had he been a modern or historic ruler, but the archaism of his pretensions to fully represent America in all aspects of life and to change the very character of time brought devastation to those strongly identified with him who found the promise killed with the President. The boom of over-investment in Kennedy contributed to the great bust at his death. Playing cultural hero not only distracted Kennedy from concentration on political tasks and dissuaded many Americans from seeking other exemplars during his life but also distracted his followers from pursuing their own political aspirations without him and dissuaded them from transferring loyalty to his less heroic successor after his death. In contrast to the swift adjustment to Kennedy's loss as imperator and also to the more frightening loss of father and the deeper loss of high priest in connection with Kennedy's death, it is his loss as an archaic representative, who brought us back to Camelot and promised to lead us forward as Contemporer, which, I believe, has afforded the most persistent and binding fixation at a personal level and most haunted our imaginations in the years following the assassination.[1]

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[1] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," p. 1.

[2] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 208.

[3] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 130.

[4] Ibid., p. 138.

[5] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 214.

E. Loss of High Priest The President is chosen, said Chief Justice Earl Warren in his eulogy for Kennedy, "to embody our ideals, the faith we have in our institutions and our belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," a belief which he saw spelled out by President Kennedy in terms of his own belief in "the dignity and equality of all human beings" and in his commitment to justice and to peace.[2] In contrast to the representative role which drew heavily on Kennedy's peculiar characteristics, the ideals which Kennedy espoused and embodied in his role as high priest were not so much his own as those of America's sacred heritage endowed with his own contemporaneity and fierce faith. Therefore, it was easier to recover from the loss of Kennedy as high priest, as the new President in succeeding to this role, bolstered by the chief and lesser priests of the church, re-affirmed the enduring values of America's civil and ecclesiastical traditions.[1] Nevertheless, as the very need for this re-affirmation testifies, for many people, temporarily, and for a few, more enduringly, the values for which Kennedy had stood as high priest were put into question when his death tore him away from supporting them. People felt lost without the mediator to whom they had looked to bring divinity to them, without the Cosmocrator on whom they had depended to uphold order and keep chaos at bay, without the prophet on whom they had relied to define reality for them. Without him, divinity, order, even reality itself was in jeopardy. People were forced to face the irrationality of the world, symbolized by the assassination, which their faith in the President had enabled them to evade. Kennedy as high priest had helped them to make sense of their world, and the senselessness of the assassination itself was compounded by his absence. While a few saw the assassination as the evil act of a single evil man which might be rectified through retribution, others exhibited an unfocused rage which saw the evil as external but could not localize it and simply flailed out at it; a shame which saw the evil infecting nation, city, and self and sought to remove the stain; a guilt which internalized responsibility for the evil and declared war on hate; or a sense of absurdity which globalized the evil as a threat to the coherence of the cosmos and ended up in confusion, despair, or symbolic self-immolation.

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[1] See Chapter VIII, #5 and Cahpter IX, #1.

[2] For a text of Warren's eulogy, see U.P.I., Four Days, p. 130.

As the identity of the alleged assassin became known, an enormous sense of incongruity began to emerge. It would have been presumptuous for anyone to have challenged the king of the most powerful nation on earth, but the thought that he had been laid low by a runt like Lee Harvey Oswald boggled the mind. It was incongruous that he who had faced down the chaos

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[1] See Chapter IX, #2.

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dragon with his nuclear arsenal at the ready should have been done in by the pot-shot of a deranged man. People felt "a sense of disproportion between cause and effect, between the impulse of an insignificant man and the fall of the leader of a great nation," observes Wolfenstein.[1] "The most powerful representative of the principles that guarantee lives," comments Freedman, "had been destroyed by a non-entity."[2] "What in the world did the President have in common with a $50-a-week man filling book orders?" ask the authors of Four Days rhetorically, and Manchester portrays Kennedy and Oswald as "diametric opposites," the one a winner, the other a loser--till now.[3] It was the "damned juxtaposition," as Corso put it, "of punk and President" that grated against a sense of rightness.[4] Why should a qualified man legitimately selected to exercise leadership be struck down while, as Cuomo put it, "the wild man . . . random as a lobster, writes our history?"[5] "It is hard to realize," said another insignificant man who decided to write history, "how a complete nothing, a zero like that, could kill a man like President Kennedy."[6]

That man was Jack Ruby. Ruby was a Jew and ran a string of sleasy night clubs, but he was a 100-per-cent American nationalist, perhaps, in part, as over-compensation for the ways in which he deviated from the norm. Ruby had loved every President, and he was very upset by Kennedy's death, more upset than he had been over the death of his own eighty-eight-year-old father five years before (according to his sister).[7] Ruby was also quite sympathetic to Jacqueline Kennedy and wished "to spare the Lady's testifying" should Oswald come to trial.[1] So he took the law into his own hands--the archaic law of talion--and sought to avenge Kennedy by murdering Oswald. Apparently, among his tangle of motives there was an impulse to set the world right, to restore it as it was, to resolve the incongruity of the assassination by bold action and thus ward off facing the intolerable brokenness of the world.

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 227.

[2] Dr. Freedman cited by Kirkham, Assassination, p. 93.

[3] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 82; Manchester, Death, p. 93.

[4] Gregory Corso, "Lines Written November 22-23, 1963, In Discord," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 115.

[5] George Cuomo, "Man of My Dreams," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 69.

[6] Manchester, Death, p. 335.

[7] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 82.

Although there are strands in our tradition, particularly in the "wild West," which might suggest it, very few regarded Jack Ruby as a hero. Only 11 per cent of the adults in the National Opinion Research Center survey felt that "the man who shot the President should be shot down or lynched" though 20 per cent said they were pleased that Oswald had been shot.[2] Children produced similar results on two indices: 85 per cent of the Detroit schoolchildren surveyed by Sigel believed it was wrong for Ruby to kill Oswald and only 19 per cent were glad it had happened; however, 41 per cent answered that they had hoped that the man who shot the President would be shot down.[3] According to Wolfenstein, young children may have wished for retribution to relieve themselves of uneasy feelings of vicarious guilt, prompt punishment closing up the world again by confirming the guilt of one definite man.[4] Lower class folk also tended to reject more complicated explanations of the assassination as the work of a sick or poorly socialized man for whom the whole society might bear some responsibility and to see it as the work of a single bad man toward whom vindictiveness was appropriate.

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[1] John Berryman, "Formal Elegy," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 44.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 172; the 1968 Harris survey confirms the 20 per cent figure pleased at Oswald's death; Assassination, p. 114.

[3] Sigel, "School Children's Reactions," p. 55.

[4] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 227.

Ginsparg found that feelings of revenge were more common among insecure children, whose pre-occupation with their own problems and greater need for a rigid, stable outside world left no room for further loss, suffering, and need, for impulses to comfort and to help, or for expectations of change as a result of Kennedy's death.[1] Greenstein found that students in more intellectually oriented fraternities at Wesleyan tended to express their emotions singly or in pairs with a sense of loss overwhelming their feelings of revenge while those in the more athletic fraternity grouped together around the television, experienced inhibition against crying, and thought up nasty tortures for the alleged assassin.[2] In general, desire for retribution declined with rising age, social class, normality, and intellectuality.[3]

Most Americans did not approve of Ruby's act. Although the 1968 Harris survey found only a third recalling that they had felt Oswald should have had a trial, the NORC survey found two thirds regretting that he lacked a trial, either out of a desire for fairness or to gain his testimony.[4] Likewise, 63 per cent of the Topeka teenagers queried favored normal legal procedures for the President's assassin.[5] Far from seeing Oswald's murder as "evening the score," most did not cotton to the primitive notion that two wrongs make a right but saw the evil of the assassination compounded by its sequel. "Murder on murder on murder, where I stagger, / whiten the good land where we have held out," limned John Berryman, as he saw one mad deed followed by another.[1] Oswald's murder was generally received as a further jolt, adding a "note of incredulous shock to the mood of mourning."[2] Ethel Kennedy, who had accepted the news of Kennedy's death so calmly, fortified by immediate religious explanation, was distraught on learning of Oswald's gruesome end, finding no possible justification for a second murder.[3] "It's modern anarchy," said some women upon hearing the news as they came out of a New York church; "it's against everything the President stood for."[4] Indeed, according to Sheatsley and Feldman, the late President's attempts to dampen extremism may have borne fruit in the greater prevalence of attempts to purge hate and intolerance rather than stamping out Communists (with whom Oswald identified himself) or other culprits in the wake of his assassination. As with the attempt on the life of a previous alleged assassin, such deeds were viewed by most as "adding to the wretchedness of the whole thing" and making us look "as if we were in fact a lawless community."[5] In contrast to the retributionists' combination of a denial of any general lawlessness in society with their own willingness to commit or condone lawless acts of vengeance, recognition of lawlessness, including a sense of collective responsibility for it, and a desire to curb it was the more dominant response, especially among women and upper class people.

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[1] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," pp. 12, 28. Children in the "vengeful" group exhibited a narrower range of emotions and interests, less expressiveness and more restriction, lower self-esteem and less trust.

[2] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 202.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 55, 226; Greenberg, "Social Research and the Assassination," p. 373.

[4] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 165; Kirkham, Assassination, p. 114.

[5] Ginsparg, Young Teen-agers' Responses," p. 10.

Anger was a common response to the assassination. The NORC survey found 73 per cent of its respondents feeling "angry that someone should do such a terrible deed," with this being a "very deepest feeling" for 44 per cent.[1] The character of the anger seems to have been shaded more toward outrage than vindictiveness. Greenstein found the unfocused nature of students' anger striking, noting that it took the form of a "diffuse flailing out," reflecting "a sense of frustration at one's inability to control events."[2] Like infantile rage, Wolfenstein sees this anger as a primitive reaction to being frustrated and cruelly deprived which does not seek to effect anything beyond its own ventilation.[3] In his "Letter From America" on the B.B.C., Alistair Cooke both depicts and pleads for this kind of rage in response to the outrageous incongruity of the assassination:

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[1] Berryman, "Formal Elegy," p. 44.

[2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 90.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 46.

[4] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 76.

[5] Kirkham, Assassination, p. 90.

> This charming, complicated, subtle and greatly intelligent man, whom the Western world was proud to call its leader, appeared for a split second in the telescopic sight of a maniac's rifle. And he was snuffed out. In that moment, all the decent grief of a nation was taunted and outraged. So that along with the sorrow, there is a desperate and howling note over the land. We may pray on our knees, but when we get up from them, we cry with the poet:
>
> Do not go gentle into that good night.
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.[4]

Shame was an even more common response. In the NORC survey, 83 per cent of the respondents felt "ashamed that this could happen in our country," with this being a "very deepest feeling" for 50 per cent.[5] Shame was even more prevalent in Dallas. While in all other indices, Dallas fell somewhat below the national average, in shame Dallasites exceeded the national average, logging an 86 per cent figure.[6] More than the anger which flailed out at an external evil, shame brought evil closer to the core of the self, as an alien presence, without taking personal responsibility for it. In the nation, there was a tendency to shift the blame for the assassination to Texas or to Dallas, and in Dallas, there was a tendency to try to shift the blame onto something else, to avert the eyes as if shame unseen were no longer shame, to cover up the nakedness, to maintain appearances, to exhibit the purifying ritual which would remove the stain on its name. "We do not know, we may never know, why the assassination happened in Dallas," said the Dallas Times Herald in its editorial of November 22, "but this we know, that as a city we must show the world the deep unity of our grief, the depths of the stunned void that is in each of us." Seeing the bullet that felled our President as having been molded in an "unstable world," the editorial made a passing reference to "seeds of hate" but assigned Dallas no special responsibility for the bullet's detonation there: "What happened here could have happened in any city. . . . But to our great sorrow, it found its mark here."[1] However, after Oswald was shot in a Dallas police station, a deed about which the city could feel more obviously and justifiably guilty, the newspaper became more explicit about Dallas' responsibility, clothed in historic religious imagery:

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 156. Detroit schoolchildren registered at 82 per cent on the shame scale; Sigel, "School Children's Reactions," p. 50.

[2] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 228.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 221 (drawing on Lindemann).

[4] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 138.

[5] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 156.

[6] Greenberg, "Social Research and the Assassination," p. 362.

> Even as we are staggered by one violent discharge following another, the citizens of Dallas are surely engaged in the greatest spiritual self-examination any American community has undergone in this century. Dallas churches held massive, prayerful, sober crowds on Sunday. . . . This was a pilgrimage, an act of civic penance compelled by an inexpressible feeling that all of us have contributed something to the atmosphere which has allowed these acts to take place here. But in church or out, Dallas is a city undergoing the dark night of the soul, a city appealing to a Higher Power.[2]

Pastors in Dallas and elsewhere advocated guilt and repentance as the proper response to the assassination. Levi Olan, a Jewish rabbi, repeated the charge that Dallas Mayor Cabell had made "in the language of

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 132.

[2] Ibid., p. 61.

XUM

the Bible" that the city had spoken too proudly of itself, indicted Dallas for its modernistic "what's in it for me" ethic, and pictured it like Jerusalem of old as a city alone, ashamed, and reproached; yet also like a prophet of hope as well as condemnation, he proclaimed that God was "jealous for Dallas" and would not forsake her and indicated, by medical analogy, that if Dallas would shift its present mood from rejecting to accepting responsibility and blame for its behavior and attempt to do something about it, its prognosis would be good.[1] In the world's largest Methodist church, William H. Dickinson, Jr., "war-time chaplain of the combat-famed 36th Division," as the UPI release identified him (making his civil-religious credentials clear), lashed out at the guilty wishes of some Dallasites for the President's death, at hateful extremism of both left and right, and at a general lawlessness. "Our God has been betrayed not only in Dallas, but throughout our nation and around the world," he said, "by irresponsible and indifferent and selfish men" whose disrespect for law and order has undermined "the subtler support of our orderly society."[2] Relating the hate theme, a favorite with ministers around the country, more explicitly to the assassin's deed, Houston pastor Charles Allen said, "In a larger sense, the trigger of that gun was pulled by a spirit of hate and destruction," while a Dallas Catholic priest, William O'Brien, said more pointedly, "The rifle that assassinated our beloved President . . . was triggered not only by the hand of a poor, distorted, frustrated maniac but by everyone who subscribes to a godless gospel of hate."[3] Moving against archaic civil religion's tendency to avoid facing America's sins, Hartford's John S.

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[1] Levi Olan in That Day with God, pp. 17-23.

[2] William H. Dickinson, Jr. in That Day With God, pp. 13, 11. See also Manchester, Death, p. 568, and U.P.I., Four Days, p. 60.

[3] Charles Allen and William O'Brien in That Day With God, pp. 27, 16.

Kennedy used the assassination as context for a diatribe on hatred:

> John Kennedy represented life, personified life, its forces of faith and hope. . . . But the touch of death is still in the world, like a shark lurking in the sunlit sea. And although we call America God's country, and flatter ourselves as being superior if not sinless, America is not clean of the hatred which is both the spawn and the seed of death. Hatred for fellow men because of the color of the skin given them by God. . . . Hatred for our fellow men because their religion is different from ours. . . . Hatred sprung from greed or envy. Hatred fed by social philosophies and political programs, which are extremist, intolerant, fanatical. Hatred of objective principles and standards, of moral demands and decencies. . . . . There is a sickness of hatred in this country today.[1]

Finally, Sioux Falls Baptist pastor Roger Frederickson accentuated both the demonic character of the evil in the assassination and our unavoidable responsibility for it:

> Let none of us forget that there is in all of this the darkness of evil. It is easy for us to pick out one man and cry, "He did it!" This is to evade the issue. The power of evil is an awesome, demonic reality. It affects us like a disease. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers." The prejudice and hatred of ordinary men can become the twisted mentality of a killer. Carelessness and indifference can breed violence on the streets and death in the highest places of responsibility. We cannot wash our hands of this incident in Dallas. We are our brother's keeper and we are involved.[2]

Yet when one looks at brother Oswald as the alleged assassin, the whole attack on hate and extremism, however commendable in itself, seems strangely wide of the mark. If this is the chaos dragon, it certainly is a good disguise! It would, perhaps, have been easier to fathom if Oswald had been a fierce fanatic who faithfully devoted himself to a cause in solidarity with others and calculated how he could best further it even at the expense of his own life, but Oswald was the lone member of the Free Cuba Committee in Dallas, was rejected by Russians and Cubans, was fuzzy about the cause he espoused (he called it Marxism), and had no clear idea how killing Kennedy would further his cause though he seemed willing enough to give his life for it in the process. If Oswald's deed was an indirect form of suicide--"My own accuser, raging with despair, ... / I kill myself in killing him"[1]--it boggles the mind not only because of the inherent irrationality of the act but also because he should have chosen so prominent a victim through which to wreak his own self-destruction. We could take it better if Oswald had something to gain by his crime, however sordid or misguided, but he seems not to have, and, despite much speculation, the extensive literature posthumously analyzing the psyche of the aalleged assassin yields no clear picture of his motivation in killing Kennedy.[2] Oswald seems to have had nothing against President Kennedy. Under interrogation, he observed that he didn't have "any particular comment about the President" though he had earlier mentioned that Kennedy had a "nice family."[3] One can, perhaps, find here a hint of the envy, resentment, and challenge to a father which poets and psychoanalysts have attributed to Oswald[4]--he was found even as a child to exhibit an ambivalence and hatred toward authority, subsequently confirmed in his both joining and chafing against the army, and to resent other children who had fathers ("nice families"?)[5]--but this pathetic creature seems to have shown none of the virulent defiance and relief one associates with the father-killing model. I think Michael Goldman better captures the spirit of the alleged assassin when he portrays Oswald as the incarnation of a "naked," irrational evil, not a hate which bears its vicious teeth but a hate which is smiling nonchalantly:

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[1] John S. Kennedy in That Day With God, p. 102.

[2] Roger Frederickson in That Day With God, p. 117.

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[1] Richard Eberhard, "The Killer," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 90.

[2] David A. Rothstein, "Presidential Assassination Syndrome, II: Application to Lee Harvey Oswald," Archives of General Psychiatry, XV (Septmber, 1966), p. 260.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 456. [4] See #1A and #2C, above.

[5] Youth psychiatrist Renatus Hartogs cited by A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 62. In "Elegy for a New Year" (Of Poetry and Power, p. 34), Jack Marshall speaks of "someone who has dreamed his father dead" feeling fear but hearing the wind whisper, "There is no place to be homesick for. You're free," making his "heart all aflutter for the take-off." But dreams of independence, which de Grazia found also after Roosevelt's death, do not seem to fit Oswald's case.

> A cold nation . . . meets hate
> rising like an athlete from his pool,
> smiling, flicking water from his chest.[1]

Several incongruities, then, mounted upon one another as the "inside story" of the assassination of John Kennedy unfolded that bleak weekend. A powerful President had been "overruled" by an insignificant man; a man of reason was done in by an act of unreason; a non-vicious man casually performed a vicious deed under contingent circumstances with no clear purpose except, perhaps, his own self-destruction or liberation,[2] and he was, in turn, not brought to justice, but murdered by a none-too-rational vice czar. "Unsinn," thought rationalist McGeorge Bundy throughout the weekend, a German word meaning, roughly, "senselessness, meaninglessness, absurdity."[3] Beyond feelings of retribution, rage, shame, and guilt, in the deepest descent into hell, the Kennedy assassination was experienced with a sense of absurdity which left familiar notions of the dynamics of good and evil within a blessed nation in a well-ordered universe far behind. The Dallas Times Herald, for instance, found the very adventitiousness of the assassination's having occurred in Dallas, while relieving the city of heavy blame, raising even thornier questions of meaninglessness in the absence of any clear connection between Dallas' "hate atmosphere," a largely right-wing phenomenon, and Oswald's deed. "It is no comfort to our grief," said its editorial of November 22, "that an insane chance operating with blind destiny brought our President's death to us."[1] With Kennedy, as high priest, being seen as "the epitome of youth, health, and vigor" and "a life and immortality symbol," it was especially jarring that he should have been "jerked away from health, from a young family, from leadership, by a senseless act of violence."[2] Kennedy had made reason dance, White tells us, but in the end it was unreason that made him dance, putting his "faith in reason," which was his central quality on which we depended, into question.[3] The sheer irrationality of Kennedy's end was hard to stomach. Jacqueline Kennedy, perhaps, could have reconciled herself to a ring of conspirators relentlessly pursuing her husband until they got him, but what was so terrible was the thought that it had been an accident, a freak, which might not have happened at all had it not happened right then and right there in that state of the assassin's mind.[4] Likewise, "it would have been much easier for the American people to accept any enemy, any conspiracy, any plot and then avange John F. Kennedy," writes Theodore White. "But what they had to face was an act of unreason, avenged by an individual act of obscenity."[5] "The final irony," reflected The Observer, "is that the most rational of present-day statesmen should have met his death as a result of an apparently irrational act."[6]

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[1] Michael Goldman, "To the Spontaneous Man, the Gifted Assassin," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 36.

[2] Despite lack of evidence, one is haunted by the father-killing theory. Perhaps, Oswald wanted both to buck father and to be punished by him. Oswald tried to get away, but his unnecessary killing of Patrolman Tippett made a successful continuation of his flight impossible. The impulse to self-destruction and to liberation can be mingled in a death wish as in Hamlet's contemplation of suicide as "a consummation devoutly to be wished. Perhaps, I am seeking to "rationalize" the deed by speculating.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 416.

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[1] For a text, see U.P.I., Four Days, p. 132.

[2] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 3.

[3] See White, Making President 1964, p. 44.

[4] For instance, Oswald had been very recently rejected by his wife and could have been, in part, expressing his aggression toward her through the assassination--again on an incomprehensibly large stage.

[5] White, Making President 1964, p. 44.

[6] For a text, see U.P.I., Four Days, p. 133.

Many were not equipped to deal with such irony; they needed a simpler world where good was good and bad was bad, and, somewhat unconvincingly, they defensively created one.[1] Some adults subsequently recovered from some of the incongruous aspects of the assassination by denying the official story that Oswald had acted alone in favor of conspiracy theories or by revising Oswald's motives through diabolization.[2] Young children, on the other hand, not being far from the garden of magic nor being intent on rationalizing the world, no doubt found the assassination experience unusually traumatic but, still only one of many strange things in the adult world. They had no difficulty in accepting a small protagonist overcoming a big giant, which happens frequently in children's stories, and Oswald's motives were no concern of theirs, but the unusual degree of parental upset mystified them at least temporarily. Wolfenstein concludes:

> For young children, the assassination will be remembered as an isolated event of an uncanny nature. The world around them, at school, at home, was in an upset state such as they had not known. . . . Their incomprehension of the grown-up world was intensified, with a sense of things being radically out of control. . . . If some feelings from that time are revived later, they will evoke something strange, something that intruded into the usual round of life and could not be quite assimilated.[3]

In between, again, it was probably adolescents who were the hardest hit by the incongruity of the assassination,[4] being old enough to want a coherent world but not mature enough to fathom its incoherences. They had received from the culture, not only from the churches but also from the Greek philosophical heritage and implicitly from Western science, a faith in a purposeful world, a rationally ordered universe, a cosmos. Yet, unlike adults, they were not used to handling experiences which contradict that order nor were they likely to have developed a well-founded faith which would have enabled them to comprehend contradictions within a larger scheme, the church's traditional teachings on evil, negativity, sin, and death--except for a weekend like this--being largely eschewed in favor of peace and light in the Christian education of children. Nevertheless, the experience of crisis still teaches, more roughly, what church and culture will not. "When John Kennedy died," writes Richard Corry, "millions of young people fell from innocence, knowing for the first time the monstrous irrationalities that can change their lives."[1] "There was also the posing of the problem of evil," adds Wolfenstein, "which recurs when something happens which is radically at variance with belief in the benevolent order of things. The essence of this problem, which has long troubled theologians, appears in the question of a four-year-old child, 'Why did they shoot him (Kennedy) if he wasn't a bad man?' Some adolescents were led to wonder whether, if such things can happen, there is a God."[2] Especially for those whose religious belief is tenuous--such as young children who recently acquired it or adolescents in the process of doubting it or adults for whom the President as high priest was an essential mediator to the divine--the assassination could raise the most radical kind of doubting. Many found themselves confronted with unanswerable questions, shattered beliefs, and deep, alien feelings:

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[1] As we noted above, a greater preference for a simple, localized view of evil which justified retribution and favored conspiracy theories correlated with declining age, class, mental health, and intellectuality.

[2] See Chapter VIII, #4.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 232.

[4] One thirteen-year-old girl said that "the whole world seemed upset and disorganized;" Wolfenstein, "Death of Parent and President," p. 78.

> Adolescents and adults both reported that they felt compelled to think intensively about what had happened. This thinking often took the form of propounding a question to which there appeared to be no answer: how could such a thing happen? It seemed that the murder of

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[1] Corry, The Manchester Affair, p. 96.

[2] Wolfenstein, "Death of Parent and President," p. 71.

> the President had shattered basic assumptions about how the world is arranged. It constituted an appalling discrepancy. We suppose that on a deeper level there was horror at the violation of an awesome taboo, a sense that perhaps the laws of conscience are not laws of nature. Feelings and fantasies from deeply repressed levels were stirred. The intensive effort to think represented a struggle to reorganize the moral and rational surface structure of the mind, shaken by confused and alien feelings from the depths.[1]

For a great many Americans, the Kennedy assassination was accompanied by what Thomas Whitbread called "the frustration of rage, despair, and grief / At life not being as it ought to be,"[2] a consciousness of what primitive Australians call "the immemorial misdirection of life."[3] The modern belief in the rationality of the universe, the archaic belief in America as a divinely innocent and invincible nation, and even the historic belief in a transcendent God who benevolently superintends the destiny of nations in judgment and in mercy—all were put into question by the assassination. The deed had exposed the irrationality lodged in the heart of the universe in a way which could neither be glossed over nor explained; it had shown America to be vulnerable at an unexpected quarter as its greatest "winner" lay irretrievable vanquished and its much-vaunted reputation for goodness was besmirched; and it led some to scale down the traditional omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God, seeing him, when squared with so titanic an eruption of evil, as limited in power, as prone to defer on his good promises, or as not sharing whatever wisdom is his, a movement in the direction of a deus absconditus or God the Void.[4] "The assassination of Kennedy in Dallas introduced the experience of the absurd," claims Michael Novak. Lacking the resources to "accept the view that history is irrational," which the experience of the next decade would teach them, "millions were drawn against their wills into the emotions of Greek tragedy: youth, death, meaninglessness, no voice to break the silence."[1] As in the myth of the death of the sacred king, W. H. Auden suggests that the cosmos is devastated when the king dies and can give no answer to questions of meaning:

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 225.

[2] Thomas Whitbread in Of Poetry and Power, p. 63.

[3] W.E.H. Stanner cited by Bellah, Beyond Belief, p. 28.

[4] In "Before the Sabbath," David Ignatow addresses a tardy God as "good father of silence" and "good father of emptiness;" Of Poetry and Power, p. 23. The difficulty of squaring the traditional Greek-rational God with radical evil is as old as Plato's paradox. For a deus absconditus as a solution, see Chapter IX, #2. For "God the Void," see Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1926).

> Why _then_? Why _there_?
> Why _thus_, we cry, did he die?
> The Heavens are silent.[2]

In its ultimate reach, the assassination led to feelings of hopelessness, confusion, and despair. In the 1968 Harris survey, 78 per cent of the subjects recalled having felt hopeless while only 4 per cent felt hopeful.[3] In the NORC survey, 38 per cent reported that they were "so confused and upset that they didn't know what to feel," a figure rising to 67 per cent among the Negro respondents.[4] It was partly because Kennedy had symbolized so much to people--as a "hero in war, a man of reason, wit, self-confidence, tolerance, urbanity, and realism" epitomizing "the ideal of the twentieth century man[5]--that his death also symbolized a great deal more than itself, its absurdity globalized to encompass the universe:

> Given this basic image, . . . it is intelligible why the murder of Kennedy touched deep human feelings, why it awakened more powerful questions than . . . historical ones. There were . . . thousands of people thrown into silent despair by this event, a despair that may be explained in terms of personal loss, though not wholly so. The event seemed to symbolize the senselessness of existence itself, the murder of a man of style and reason by a Dostoevskian underground man who had no sense of either.[6]

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[1] Novak, _Choosing Our King_, p. 116.

[2] W. H. Auden, "Elegy for J. F. K.," in _Of Poetry and Power_, p. 111.

[3] Kirkham, _Assassination_, p. 100.

[4] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 156.

[5] See Chapter V, #1, above.

[6] Harvey, _Historian and Believer_, p. 255.

Confessing that "our world crumbled around us," William Dickinson echoed so many others in seeing a precious part of himself dying with Kennedy and his confidence in his country put in jeopardy by the assassination:

> We were robbed of something more than a friend or loved one. Indeed, to many he was thought of neither as friend nor loved one. And yet, because he was a symbol of the most cherished portions of our life, something of us died with him, and we are suddenly haunted by the words of another President who, just a hundred years ago, asked in the face of a national crisis "whether our nation so conceived and so dedicated could long endure."[1]

One college student painted the crisis in apocalyptic terms as if the future not only of the nation but also of the world were at stake; "it is as if the end of the world had come and you're not prepared for it,"[2] he said. Death was the pre-occupation of millions as they watched hours and hours of television devoted to it, reversing the usual evasion of death with morbidity:

> The tragedy of John Kennedy's assassination was a supertragedy to millions of Americans. Not only did they feel highly involved with the victim, but also the mass media enabled them to experience the President's death as vividly as if it had occurred in their own families. The injustice of life, the vulnerability of us all to death and disappointment, the shock of collective sorrow, the finality of the grave: Everyone found in the death of the President a monumental repetition of his own pain.[3]

For at least one poet, the funeral ceremonies brought no balm as he felt the irreparable loss of his self in Kennedy's death:

> Drums, drums, I too am dead
> I breathe no breath, but only dread.
> I have no soul, but lay my head
> Upon his soul, and on that bed
> I stop.
>
> Drums in heartbeat cadence drill
> His life away. My life is still.
> My heart drums down my wit, my will,
> And with his cadence, mounts the hill
> And stops.
>
> He stops. I stop. He ends. I end,
> He will not heal. I will not mend.[4]

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[1] William Dickinson in That Day With God, p. 8.

[2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 26. [3] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 52.

[4] Willam Butler, "November 25, 1963," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 30.

The Kennedy assassination did not create the problem of evil, but it exposed it anew, with excruciating pain for some. In the imagery of the Biblical myth of the Fall of Man, it was as if man were again expelled from the garden and banished to live forever in the cursed wilderness without hope (loss of imperator), again deprived of the father's freely given sustenance and forced to work for his bread (loss of father), again turned away from the face of the lordly one and forced to go it on his own (loss of representative), again impelled to doubt the heavenly ideals and forced to come to his own knowledge of good and evil (loss of high priest), and, in that process, again stripped of self-deception and forced to face his own nakedness (shame), again called away from blaming others (retributive anger) and forced to face his own responsibility (guilt), again deprived of dreaming innocence and forced to face his own limitations (absurdity), again cut off from the tree of life and forced to face his own mortality (despair). The enormity of the response to the assassination can only underscore the strength of archaic civil religion in America and the prominence of the President as sacred king within it. Fairlie is astonished at its eclipse of the modern:

> One would think that one was reading about the death of a pharoah in ancient Egypt, when people did indeed think that the sun would be darkened forever, that the moon would leave its course, that the very stars would be affrighted at his passing. One would not think that one was reading about the death of a politician in a republic, with a pragmatic temper and a positivist tradition, in the middle of the twentieth century.[1]

Modern civil religion would reassert itself after the assassination weekend,[2] but, for the nonce, it was archaic civil religion allied with historic civil religion which would attempt to heal the wounds, so recently and deeply inflicted, by reaffirming the sacred symbols of both traditions through the combined pageantry of drums and hymns, guns and graves, flags and crosses.

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 234.

[2] See Chapter IX, #1.

III. The Third Day

With few exceptions, Americans drank deeply and intensely, though briefly, of the cup of grief and then recovered, more or less quickly. Just as the defenses erected, by fight or flight, against facing the loss in the protest phase gave way to acknowledgement in the disorganization phase, so the inner dynamic of the distress present in that phase gave rise to the "need to bring order out of chaos," resolved through re-organization, and produced a kind of "post-disaster utopia" and fellow-feeling based on having been through the experience of the assassination together.[1] Recovery was aided by sharing feelings, by perpetuating Kennedy through idealization and identification, and by having religious values associated with Kennedy built up and excessive emotions purged out through participation in processions, funerals, and memorial services.

A. Unification The greatest sense of unification was felt by crowds that accompanied Kennedy on each stage of his final, baleful journey. A crowd of 100,000, hushed and often weeping, watched the military procession bear Kennedy's body from the White House to the Capitol on Sunday afternoon; 250,000 people filed by his coffin throughout Sunday night with 12,000 turned away when the great bronze doors of the Capitol were closed at 9:00 A.M. Monday morning; altogether one million people lined the route the procession followed on Monday from the Capitol to the White House to St. Matthew's Cathedral and, finally, to Arlington Cemetery.[2]

The feeling of unity, participating in a great national corporate agony and celebration, which colored the whole weekend, was most clearly and memorably represented by the immense crowd of people winding past

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 222, 70; Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 231.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 401, 440, 562-565, 538; U.P.I., Four Days, pp. 43, 94, 99.

XUM

Kennedy's coffin in the Capitol rotunda Sunday night. By dusk, the line of cars stretched all the way to Baltimore, thirty miles away, and the line of people stretched for two miles at times, even three miles (at 2:03 A.M.!). It was a very diverse crowd. A good share of them were college students, and folk songs were common as they waited in line for six to eight hours to pay their respects to the fallen President. Some were children, some were crippled. A whole convent of thirty-six nuns from Jersey City were among them. Though a few notables were present--Jacqueline and Robert Kennedy joined them briefly at 9:00 P.M.--most were ordinary people. Differences in race and temperament were widespread but did not seem to matter. A white woman who looked back reprovingly at a crying Negro woman herself broke into sobs as she reached the casket and went out with her arm around the colored woman.[1] Class, national origin, and party also made less difference as the whole nation was caught up in mourning. The weekend's events may have been the "most democratic occasion in Washington's memory," writes Manchester.[2] White House servants were invited to the funeral just as monarchs were, and Kennedy's personal friends, some of them dating back to when he was a commoner himself, marched in the procession. Writes White:

> Behind the family trudged all the great of the world--and also the small and forlorn, unknown to fame who had been Kennedy's personal friends. Long and short, robust and frail, stooped and erect, they walked, kings and queens, princes and foreign ministers and generals. In the endless, spankingly smart military precision of banners, troops, guards, pomp, formation step and parade-timing of the long day, thesee walkers, shuffling and ambling with neither pace nor order, reduced glories and glitter to the stumbling pace of common mourners.[3]

Added Mary McGrory: "Of John Kennedy's funeral,it may be said that he would have like it. It had that decorum and dash that was his special style. It was full of children and princes gardeners and governors.[1]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 565.

[2] Ibid., p. 563.

[3] White, Making President 1964, p. 29.

Unlike a parade, the crowds were, by and large, subdued, and presence in them was seen as an act of devotion. Those who stood in line to pay their respects to the President in the Capitol were "less a crowd than a congregation," Manchester tells us, moved by reverence and veneration.[2] One lad whose mother did not know he cared for anything in the world showed his devotion to Kennedy by visiting his coffin.[3] When it was announced that the doors to the rotunda would be closed soon, a mother had her children kneel with her on the sidewalk, saying, "We can pray right here. God and the President will hear us just as well as inside."[4] Others who had no chance of seeing the coffin, including two teenagers who had walked from Baltimore, did not complain and did not leave, just being there being enough, the least they could do.[5]

People also showed their devotion by attending church. The impression was given that people flocked to churches on the assassination weekend. Jacqueline Kennedy's mother was surprised to find every pew filled in a quiet Episcopal church in Washington with ministers at the altar on Friday night.[6] Television treated the announcement of a special Mass at Georgetown University, of Washington's Episcopal cathedral remaining open all night, and of Cardinal Cushing's being selected as celebrant as news flashes, and it showed scenes of thousands of Americans praying in churches.[7] The Cardinal estimated that more people attended church on the assassination weekend than on "any other day in our nation's history."[8] However, statistical evidence revealed that, although a third of those who attended church

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 28.
[2] Manchester, Death, p. 562.
[3] White, Making President 1964, p. 28.
[4] Manchester, Death, p. 563
[5] Manchester, Death, p. 563.
[6] Ibid., p. 211.
[7] Ibid., pp. 410, 434.
[8] Richard Cardinal Cushing, "Preface," in That Day With God, p. vii.

XUM

attended more frequently than usual, only 50 per cent of its representative national sample attended church over the weekend, barely 4 per cent above the average church attendance figures for 1962 and 1963.[1] Nevertheless, many churches were crowded on both Sunday and Monday. In Dallas, newsmen estimated that half a million (out of a metropolitan population of 1,152,215) attended worship services, with standing room only at more than 600 churches on Sunday morning, and on Monday at Temple Emmanu-El in New York City, 5,000 Jews crammed in for a memorial service while another thousand were turned away.[2] With "countless" Americans going to their churches and temples to pray, television viewing--which had reached its peak of the weekend on Monday morning with 90 per cent at one time tuned to the funeral procession--reached low ebb for the entire weekend during the church services held simultaneously with Kennedy's funeral.[3]

Through a variety of services, the churches contributed what they could to national unification: doing together what they could, as in the pray-in of clergy at the White House Friday night; trying to make the services run by only one church, such as Kennedy's funeral, available to all; and offering complementary services, such as the multitude of memorial services, for those who preferred the setting of their own church or temple. Just as clergymen from all major faiths had prayed the President aboard the ship of state at his inaugural ceremony, so now they came to the White House to pray over the remains of their helmsman, a "kind of spontaneous ecumenical council," as Manchester describes them, convened in death by John Kennedy. The clergymen thought of him, he adds, "not as a Catholic

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 162. The Gallup poll found 46 per cent attending church on the average during 1962 and 1963.

[2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 60.

[3] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 24, 14n (Nielsen figures).

President, but as President of the United States, and each of them wanted to pray to his God for his President."[1] The Catholic Church, of course, did not change the basic structure of its funeral and other Masses, including the use of Latin in them, but voluntary parts were almost all in English and national in sentiment. Although some Protestants found the funeral "incomprehensible" or "just ceremonial," few thought it unfitting to attend, and Episcopalian Jamie Auchincloss even took Communion at the private White House Mass on Saturday. Far from looking askance at his "crossing over the line," his participation was seen as an act of devotion to the President he idolized, "forever endearing him to both the President's family and his own."[2] Protestants of very different political stripes, often at loggerheads with each other--such as Billy Graham, John Glenn, George Wallace, Martin Luther King, Jr., Henry Ford II, Dwight Eisenhower, Harry Truman, Richard Nixon, Nelson Rockerfeller, Barry Goldwater--attended the funeral along with Catholics and others and were joined by millions of Americans of every religious and political persuasion watching the funeral on television, whom Schramm dubs a "congregation of 150 million."[3] Even the decision to decline to watch the funeral in favor of a local memorial service was not seen as divisive. Being with many others in the church of your choice while others were in theirs contributed to the sense of national unity since the focus was the same. Differences were buried and separation of church and state forgotten as the churches tended the national altar, harmonizing like many strings on a guitar in a common devotion to God and country. The unifying themes of Americanism, often aarchaic and rarely critical, were predominant in many of the churches' regular and special services, and Monday's memorial services were actually convened in response to a national summons as the churches complied wholeheartedly with President Johnson's proclamation which set Monday aside as a day of mourning and "earnestly recommended" that citizens "assemble in their respective places of divine worship, there to bow down in submission to Almighty God, and to pay their homage of love and *reverence* to the memory of a great and good man."[1] Monday was the "real Sabbath of the week," said Manchester, overshadowing the previous Jewish Sabbath and Christian Lord's Day, at the climax of a very religious weekend. Within it, churches played their part, by providing supplementary services, in a much broader religious outpouring, which included frequent references to the deity and to the American heritage by political leaders, a Catholic-state funeral combining ecclesiastical and national religion, and much private prayer.

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 423. [2] Ibid., pp. 586, 463.

[3] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 94; Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 24.

Even silence seemed an act of devotion. Deference was shown by the halting of trains, buses, elevators, phone and cable communications between 12:14 and 12:19 P.M. on Monday while the funeral was in progress, allowing nothing to distract from the nation's single vision. Equating silence with ecclesial piety, *The New York Times* headlined "New York Like a Vast Church" though, when the silence was broken, one heard not church music but the military sound of taps played by an Eagle scout, to which cab drivers bowed their heads at Times Square, or the militant strains of the Navy Hymn played by the Salvation Army band on Fourteenth Street.[2]

Whether in crowds or churches, watching the funeral or on the streets, everyone seemed to be focused on the same event in a similar frame. Even those who, out of irreligion or for other reasons, chose to look away at this particular moment hardly avoided the avalanche of civil religion--in which the churches played only a small part--which came at them through the "television wake," which, as we noted, was about "the only show in town."[1] While the group process of standing in crowds or going to church or sharing feelings about the assassination did most to give a sense of unity and aid recovery--especially if accompanied by consensus, correction, and dampening of extreme views[2]--watching television, simultaneously though separately, with many others also gave a sense of unity and participation (some even knelt by the screen just as if they were in church),[3] which stimulated speedier recovery through emoting and display of social norms. "The fact that most of the people of a nation," writes Schramm, "felt that they could join together, even through television, in memorial services to a fallen leader must have greatly helped to expiate the grief and speed social re-integration."[4] Adds Wolfenstein:

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[1] U.P.I., *Four Days*, p. 53 (full text; italics mine).

[2] Manchester, *Death*, p. 585.

> The sense of all joining in a common response has much emotional value for the mourner. He is not alone in his suffering. There is general acknowledgement of great cause for distress. Fellings flow more freely from the awareness of re-enforcement from others. The mourner experiences a sense of increased poignancy and at the same time assuagement from this sharing of emotion.[5]

Although surveys found a considerable range in the degree of involvement with the assassination and found only 18 per cent predicting greater unity as a result of it,[6] the momentary sense of unity was well-nigh overwhelming. Manchester does not altogether exaggerate when he exclaims, "The sense of shared sorrow bound the American people together more closely than any other nation since the beginning of man."[7]

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[1] For specific figures on television viewing and assessments of its contributions to unification, see the introductions to this whole chapter and to #2.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," pp. 120, 123-129.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 428.

[4] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 9.

[5] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 217.

[6] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 164. See Chapter IX, #2.

XUM

The drive for unification inundated the "wall of separation" between church and state, which turned out to be, as so often in American practice, not a wall but a hazy line. The line between church and state, which had been drawn sharply in the 1960 campaign, in part by Kennedy himself, was not erased but it was bent enough, as it has been bent for Protestants for years, to include the minstrations of a particular church within a state funeral, this time in Catholic dress. The elaborateness of Catholic ritual, which is common enough in old-world countries, did not seem out of place in the special circumstances of the assassination weekend though it was highly unusual in American public life. Comments Verba, "In a society in which the formal ideology is secular, in which ceremony is relatively underplayed (compared with societies having monarchic or aristocratic traditions), and in which the assassinated leader was of a minority and controversial religion, the close linkage of religious institutions to the events of the crisis weekend is particularly striking."[1] Though often accused of leading to fragmentation, a truly modern society seeks submersion of private interests only to the extent necessary to maintain a minimal social order and sees no need for ceremony to lead us to a deeper and more stifling unity. Historic societies have sought an organic or hierarchical unity of diverse members in the body politic, and historic churches, in particular, have sought unity as reconciliation, breaking down walls without dissolving differences or bowing the knee to Caesar. Had churches been operating in an historic frame, they would have done more to challenge the misplaced faith that had made the assassination as deep a crisis as it turned out to be (without being totally insensitive to the mood and needs of the moment)--rather than simply serving as handmaidens of the state on an archaic pattern. The clergy comment that they were praying for an American rather than a Catholic President may have represented a distinction between his public and private person, but it is also suggestive of Herberg's thesis that being an American is the basic identity, for both President and people, while ecclesiastical affiliation is seen as a secondary and tolerably variable identification, one of several ways of being an American.[1] It is certainly the case that the assassination weekend would have been quite religious even without the participation of the churches, especially if we accept Verba's contention that the sacred and the secular are closely meshed in the top institutions of our political system and that devotion to country evoked by the politico-religious symbols central to our society constitute a primordial religious commitment stronger than ecclesiastical devotion.[2] It is also clear that the churches, by and large, not only failed to limit but actually contributed to the drive for what must be viewed from an historic perspective as too great a degree of unification on the wrong basis. Though ephemeral, this archaic sense of unification did lead to posthumous obedience to an idealized Kennedy and to a temporary decline in partisanship expressed in the enactment of a spate of legislation associated with Kennedy, which, however, must be judged on its merits not its genesis.[3]

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 352.

B. Idealization The opinions of the American people about Kennedy's presidency soared after his assassination. The National Opinion Research Center survey found that fully half the adult population surveyed after the funeral called Kennedy "one of the two or three best Presidents the country ever had." In addition, another 28 per cent described him as better than

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[1] Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew. I use "ecclesiastical" here in a broad sense to include non-church-goers who identify with a church-religious group. For Kennedy's overriding Americanism and its making up for the "deficiency" of his being Catholic, see Chapter I, #3.

[2] Verba, "Political Commitment," pp. 352, 354. See Chapter III, #3.

[3] See #C and Chapter IX, #4, below.

XUM

average while only 2 per cent termed him below average or one of the worst Presidents. Broken into subgroups, Southern whites who had voted for Kennedy in 1960 came close to the national average as 78 per cent of them rated Kennedy above average or better while 97 per cent of the Negro respondents and 90 per cent of northern white Kennedy supporters so rated him; even among those who did not votedfor Kennedy in 1960, 65 per cent in the North and 44 per cent in the South rated Kennedy as one of the best Presidents or better than average. These findings contrast strongly with the most recent Gallup poll taken before his death, dated November 10, which found only 59 per cent of the nation approving "the way Kennedy is handling his job as President" while 28 per cent disapproved and 13 per cent were undecided.[1]

Particularly if one discounts this Gallup poll as "temporary," there may be some truth in Sorensen's claim that John Kennedy had hit his stride, was entering the peak of his career, respected and beloved by his countrymen just before death cut him short.[2] Becoming President had certainly increased Kennedy's popularity beyond that exhibited in his cliff-hanging election--though it had fluctuated and, perhaps, worn thin while in office, particularly in regard to his performance on particular issues. Still, as President, Kennedy was viewed in an idealized light; his death intensified that idealization, increasing admiration and affection for a lost love object.[3] The estimate of Americans concerning not only their view of Kennedy but also their recollection of their own voting behaviour in regard to him rose both during his presidency and then again after his death. While 49.7 per cent of the voting population actually voted for

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 166; Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 358.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 846.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 229, 230.

Kennedy in 1960, a June 1963 survdy found 59 per cent of the population surveyed reporting having voted for him while after his assassination, 65 per cent said they had done so.[1]

Testimony to recognition of Kennedy's increased stature after his death was frequent. In an unusually serious episode of the television show "That Was The Week That Was," David Frost asserted that death is not a leveler but reveals the eminent.[2] Pointing out that what is taken for granted in the ongoing rush of history is treasured when it is cut off, Richard Hofstadter said, "You never know quality till it is gone."[3] As was said of Lincoln, wrote William Fine in the preface to his compilation of assassination weekend sermons, "a tree is best measured when it is down. Kennedy in his death endowed the world with a keener appreciation of the things he stood for."[4] "Death brings a re-assessment of your opinions," said a Wesleyan student who had not been at all conscious of being powerfully attached to the President two or three days before his death. "You have to make a final image."[5] Death put John Kennedy's life in restrospect and the result, aided by television's amplification of one's memories in a positive light, was almost universally a "retrospective idealization," as Greenstein calls it, a greater attachment on the part of those who supported Kennedy and a lessening of opposition by those who had opposed him.[6]

As is characteristic of the American response to crisis, including that brought into being by previous presidential assassinations, Americans of all political stripes joined to praise their fallen President.[7] Negative feelings were suppressed in line with the ancient Roman maxim not to speak ill of the dead.[1] Given social constraints and the emotional upheaval produced by the President's death, people were motivated to feel they were in greater agreement than they actually were, and later they realized this.[2] Adulation was common, perhaps less rooted in hypocrisy's contrivance than in the feelings of the moment. Even Kennedy's political opponents found something good to say about him; they admired his warm personality, his intelligence, his courage--*if* it is courage that makes a man great.[3] Kennedy's shortcomings were viewed with benign understanding, as in Everett Dirksen's Senate eulogy: "if at any moment he may have seemed overeager, it was but the reflection of a zealous crusader and missioner who knew where he was going" and who tried to move the nation faster than it had bargained for ("covenanted") out of his own deep conviction.[4] Preachers discouraged partisan thinking, portrayed Kennedy's defense of civil rights as above party politics, and extolled his political philosophy, generalized as "peace in freedom with justice for all men," as something with which every once could agree though differing on means and methods.[5] Even his 1960 opponent, Richard Nixon, who had secretly admired the President extravagantly, wrote a letter expressing an Americanism greater than what divided them.[6]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 505. [2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 66.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 937. [4] Fine, That Day With God, p. 2.

[5] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 235.

[6] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 231; Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 207. For political effects, see Chapter IX, #4 and #6.

[7] Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 168-169. See #2A, above.

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[1] Wolfenstein, *Children and Death*, p. 229 (*De mortuis nihil nisi bonum*).

[2] Seymour Feshbach and Norma Feshbach, "Personality and Political Values," in *Kennedy Assassination*, p. 302.

[3] Manchester, *Death*, p. 468; Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 209; Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," pp. 117, 123.

[4] Everett Dirksen cited by U.P.I., *Four Days*, p. 131.

[5] Bennett J. Sims and Sidney A. Brooks in Fine, *That Day With God*, pp. 159, 173; Charles J. McKirachan, "The President is Dead: God Never Dies," p. 2.

[6] Manchester, *Death*, p. 447.

XUM

The most frequent recipients of idealized praise were Kennedy's qualities. In his eulogy at the Capitol, Speaker McCormack asserted that "President John Fitzgerald Kennedy possessed all the qualities of greatness," mentioning deep faith, complete confidence, and human sympathy.[1] The New York Times extolled his quick intelligence, deep intellect, oratorical powers, peace, political sophistication, moderation, and courage.[2] Grayson Kirk singled out courage, intelligence, and compassion.[3] Dave Bartlett seized upon courage, humor, and grace.[4] Though leaving it to others to measure, Cardinal Cushing, in his Boston eulogy, mentioned the swiftness of Kennedy's resolution, the power of his persuasion, the efficacy of his action, and the courage of his conviction.[5] Samuel Miller spoke of the passion of his concern for his beloved country, his swift courage, and firm conviction.[6] Charles McKirachan called him articulate, gifted, urbane, good-humored, and courageous.[7] George Doucherty mentioned his Churchillian confidence, intellectually sensitive mind, and saving grace of humor.[8] William O'Brien saw him as "representative of young America at its best, dedicated, fearless."[9] Frederick Driftmeier saw Kennedy's life as a profile of courage, placing others before himself, dying as he lived, with daring, true to his ideals of vigorous manhood.[10]

The qualities that eulogizers extolled in public were also mentioned in data obtained through participant observation, interviews, and surveys. Barber found the workers he observed talking about Kennedy's directness, youth, and diligence at work.[11] In the NORC survey, when asked to choose the four adjectives out of sixteen which best described the President, 80 per cent chose intelligent, 66 per cent courageous, 52 per cent hardworking, 48 per cent sincere, 47 per cent a good speaker, and 30 per cent strong (with less than a fourth choosing wise, young, liberal, or conservative).[1]

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 130 (text). [2] Ibid., p. 132.

[3] Fine, That Day With God, p. 84. [4] Manchester, Death, p. 446.

[5] Cushing, "Eulogy," in Murray, Legacy of an Assassination, p. 5.

[6] Fine, That Day With God, p. 38.

[7] McKirachan, "The President Is Dead: God Never Dies," p. 2.

[8] Fine, That Day With God, p. 201. [9] Ibid., p. 16. [10] Ibid., p. 40.

[11] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 117.

When people turned from Kennedy's qualities to his projected or actual accomplishments, they idealized him less. Writes Barber:

> In the early phases of these discussions, when the respondents' whole attention was devoted to the slain President, Kennedy was described in extremely positive terms, as a man of exceptional character, as a President of heroic proportions. These feelings were not amended in the conversations; the affection was as strong at the end as at the beginning. But as these people turned their thoughts to the future, they slowly shifted their frame of reference from the man to his policies, and the latter were evaluated in a more balanced way. . . . There was little hesitation about criticizing particular details of the Kennedy program. The transition was made from an emotional reaction of respect and affection for the President as a person to reasoning about his policy recommmendations. The hero was still there, but he could be wrong.[2]

One trucker gave Kennedy credit for trying, e.g., trying to "bring better understanding among colored and white," but admitted that Kennedy was "partial in some ways." Another trucker felt that Kennedy had not accomplished much in his short term of office.[3] Newspapers said that he had not been President long enough to achieve greatness.[4] Sorensen, while claiming that Kennedy was at the peak of his career, nevertheless asserts that Kennedy's was a truncated life, only beginning to bear fruit, making it unfair to judge him by his actual accomplishments.[5] Kennedy's lack of accomplishments was often seen in a positive light by mourners who fantasized the great things he would have accomplished had he lived or skirted by projecting unspecified positive effects on the future.[6] Thus, Fine

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 166.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," pp. 127-128.

[3] *Ibid.*.

[4] Manchester, *Death*, p. 628.

[5] Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 846.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 848-852; Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 936; White, *Making President 1964*, pp. 35-43 (White admits some domestic failures).

XUM

claims, "His life ran a short course but his effects on the world will fill the long years."[1]

When Kennedy was eulogized for what he had done, race and peace were prominent areas. To Earl Warren, Kennedy was a fighter for justice, an apostle of peace.[2] One Topeka teenager thought that Kennedy was "one of the best Presidents of the United States for the help he gave the Negro and for the preservation of peace between the major powers of the earth."[3] Likewise, Senator Dirksen saw Kennedy's vision attested in his determination to effectuate a test ban treaty, his courage in his unrelenting devotion to equality and civil rights, and, besides them, his devotion to our system of Constitutional government in his attitude toward separation of church and state.[4]

In the peace area, the Chicago Tribune hailed Kennedy for constantly laboring to keep peace in the world.[5] Earl Warren commended Kennedy's "character, vision, and quiet courage" which enabled him to "chart for us a safe course through the shoals of treacherous seas that encompass the wolrd."[6] More specifically, The New York Times extolled the courage Kennedy showed in the Cuban missile crisis; a kitchen helper praised him for "keeping Khrushchev level;" and poet Robert Tucker saw him "healing cold war scars" through the disarmament agency, the peace corps, and the test ban treaty.[7] Similarly, William Kelligar praised Kennedy as a "national leader in the cause of world freedom" who met the Communist challenge to this hemisphere, pursued the test ban, and sent peace corps youth to teach emerging peoples.[8]

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[1] Fine, That Day With God, p. 2. [2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 187.

[3] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," p. 15.

[4] U.P.I. Four Days, p. 131. [5] Ibid., p. 133. [6] Ibid., p. 130.

[7] Ibid., p. 132; Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 118; Robert Tucker, "Memorial," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 80.

[8] William Kelligar in Fine, That Day With God, p. 169.

In the area of race, the New York World Telegram and Sun pointed to Kennedy's "instinctive feeling of brotherhood" which led him to give high importance to the civil rights bill.[1] Barber's Negro laundry workers felt that "President Kennedy was more for the colored people than any other President."[2] Samuel Miller commended Kennedy's "patient but moving pressure for justice and dignity of all men."[3] Reinhold Niebuhr was more explicit:

> The young President, confronted with the Negro revolt (which he did not initiate), did not vacillate or temporize. He gave the Negro citizen the full support of the federal power and summoned the nation to solve what indeed was a great moral crisis.[4]

Other areas were touched on but more sparingly. Barber's kitchen and laundry workers were gratified by Kennedy's efforts to raise the minimum wage and to increase jobs.[5] Charles McKirachan was impressed by Kennedy's daring to "tackle every possible problem of the weak and lowly, the forgotten and politically insignificant," including youth, aged, unemployed, and slumdwellers.[6] Rabbi Zerin commended him not only for his concern for the poor (including unskilled, migrants, aged, minorities), but also for his concern for crime, hunger, and lack of opportunity.[7]

The assassination weekend was certainly no time to make a dispassionate modern political analysis of the Kennedy presidency, and historic assessments were also held in abeyance as uncritical adulation flowed in an archaic vein. It is, perhaps, a kindness not to speak ill of the dead

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 133.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 117.

[3] Samuel Miller in Fine, That Day With God, p. 38.

[4] Reinhold Niebuhr in Fine, That Day With God, p. 89.

[5] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 117.

[6] McKirachan, "The President Is Dead: God Never Dies," p. 3.

[7] Edwin Zerin in Fine, That Day With God, p. 183.

XUM

since they cannot defend themselves. As with Kennedy, nothing negative was spoken at Oswald's funeral, no mention of his alleged crime: "we are not here to judge," said the Reverend Louis Saunders; "we are here to lay him away before an understanding God."[1] After Kennedy's funeral and memorial service eulogies were done, the conventional suspension of judgment started to fade and people began to make muted criticisms of Kennedy as a politician which, like academic letters of recommendation, could only be expressed as qualifications of the positive but which, nonetheless, indicated a non-archaic ability to set Kennedy against values and interests external to himself rather than regarding him as the epitome of all virtue and goodness. Yet more overt criticisms of Kennedy were a long time in coming. The very archaic depth and power of the assassination experience and the memorial books and annually recurrent memorial films which arose to meet that situation, preserving the same uncritical mood as the eulogies,[2] tended to retard a--perhaps painful--reassessment of Kennedy in historic or modern terms. With the stage set by idealization, Kennedy would be further clothed in explicit mythic images before he would be stripped again, and a halo would envelop him before a harsher light would expose that "the courage of conviction" was precisely what he lacked until perhaps the end of his life and that the Cuban missile crisis was hardly a perfect showcase of strength and wisdom and so forth.[3] The idealization of Kennedy, which helped to compensate for the tragedy which befell him and us, aided immediate recovery but also hindered the long-term recovery of our senses.

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[1] A.P.I., Torch Is Passed, p. 92.

[2] For the media of memorialization and its rootedness in the assassination weekend, see Chapter VIII, #2 and the introduction to the chapter.

[3] See Chapter I, #1, Chapter IV, #3, Chapter VI, #4, etc.

C. Identification People were not content just to idealize Kennedy but went on to identify with him. Kennedy was "transfigured" by his death, preached Richard Steiner, gaining thereby an "immortality of influence."[1] He was "beatified" and "canonized,"[2] and, like a saint, was seen not only as excellent but as exemplary. "Death swept away both affection and enmity," wrote Manchester; "it was replaced by idolatry."[3] Clergymen in their sermons on the assassination weekend, as well as politicians and ordinary citizens, not only lavished extravagant praise on Kennedy but also made ringing exhortations to identify with Kennedy's alleged values and follow them as if they were Gospel.

Kennedy's death did not remove him as a model but made him more potent. As we noted, several Wesleyan students had found Kennedy's loss very painful because they looked up to him, idealized him, identified with him and hoped to be like him, incorporating him into their very selves as an ego ideal.[4] Now the initial bearer of that ideal lay dead, but that would not prevent the ego ideal within the self from a continuing life of its own though now in "disembodied" form. On the contrary, there is a tendency, in partial denial of a beloved leader's painful death, to internalize, to bear his image within one's self, to perpetuate him whom a martyr's death has further idealized by identifying with his traits and aims and rendering a more binding posthumous obedience to the principles he embodied.[5] "You were and are ourselves," wrote poet Lewis Turco, "an emblem of what we strive to be," a source of both identification and inspiration.[1] "His coffin cannot contain him," wrote Inman with a hint of resurrection, and, with a clear image of communion-incorporation, he continues:

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[1] Richard Steiner in Fine, That Day With God, p. 152.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 169; Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 137.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 562.

[4] See #2D, above.

[5] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. xviii, xvix, 231-23 (based on Freud).

> . . . mourning, we receive
> and, accepting his death, we
> take unto us the living
> flesh of his meanings.[2]

The process, say the poets, is both voluntary and involuntary, a process of making meaning and of finding meaning thrust upon one, a matter of fate and choice and possession. We are "possessed by what we now no more possess," says W. Nicholas Knight, quoting Robert Frost's words with a new twist.[3] On the other hand, what we make of Kennedy is our responsibility over which he has no more control, according to W. H. Auden.[4] The disturbance of the assassination put people in a frame where basic questions were thrust upon them rendering them more amenable to exhortations to rededicate themselves either in ways directly related to Kennedy or using his loss as an occasion to rededicate themselves to values independent of him; the first of these alternatives is our current concern.[5]

Common among appeals to rededication to Kennedy's values was the theme of giving: Kennedy had given himself in dying, and we ought to receive and reciprocate. "Kennedy had loved America," wrote Theodore White, "and now suddenly Americans had become aware of their answering love."[6]

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[1] Lewis Turco, "Nov. 22,1963," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 21.

[2] Will Inman, "Jacqueline," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 39.

[3] W. Nicholas Knight, "Death of J. K.," p. 18.

[4] W. H. Auden, "Elegy for J. F. K.," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 111.

[5] For the latter alternative, see Chapter IX, #2. Comparisons of the two kinds of rededication are definitely in order, but since the question of what to make of Kennedy has more to do with recovery from his assassination and the question of how to get along without him has more to do with succession, they will be dealt with separately.

[6] White, Making President 1964, p. 16.

With some, only receiving was stressed. John Steinbeck wrote of Kennedy as the "best of his people who by his life, and his death, gave back the best of them for their own."[1] A nurse who got no re-inforcemnt in exaggerating the assassination's dangerous effects ended up saying, "I think of the good Kennedy will leave with the people rather than anything else."[2] With others, giving in return was also stressed. In his eulogy, Mike Mansfield asserted that Kennedy gave that we might give of ourselves and in giving leave no room for bigotry, hatred, prejudice, and arrogance, as he challenged people to take Kennedy's gifts.[3] Similarly, the Louisville Courier Journal painted Kennedy as a man dedicated to binding up the wounds of the world and healing the divisions separating men and asked whether we could honor the concepts of dignity and decency and brotherhood and continue Kennedy's work of healing.[4] "Let us make endure in our world," wrote Cardinal Cushing in an incipient articulation of a martyr myth, "those things for which he stood and for which, finally, he gave his life."[5]

Carrying on the theme more specifically, Justice Goldberg said, "We owe it to our martyred President to rid the nation of the evil forces of hatred and bigotry and violence. . . . We must make our course full of hope for a better world, . . . for freedom, for justice, for order, for peace."[6] Since the assassination was often blamed on "hatred," a crusade against hatred was deemed by many to be an appropriate response to it.

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[1] John Steinback cited by Mansfield, Death, p. 563.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 124.

[3] Mike Mansfield in Fine, That Day With God, p. 185.

[4] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 132.

[5] Richard Cardinal Cushing in Fine, That Day With God, p. viii.

[6] Arthur Goldberg in Fine, That Day With God, p. 208.

Chief Justice Earl Warren called on the people to abjure hatred, in his eulogy, and hoped that Kennedy's martyrdom would soften the hearts of those whose venom kindles assassination thoughts in others.[1] Similarly, Governor Pat Brown of California hoped that Kennedy's "sacrifice may bring about a lessening of some of the hatred in our country."[2] Former Vice President Richard Nixon urged people to do everything they could in their everyday lives to reduce the forces of hatred as "the greatest tribute we can pay" to Kennedy's memory.[3] In Texas, hatred in the form of bigotry was especially singled out. Hanging his head in shame because Kennedy was killed in the Lone Star State, Judge W. A. Morrison said at the state memorial service in Austin: "We must rid ourselves . . . of all bigotry; from this day forward, Texans must be known as progressive thinkers, just as President Kennedy was."[4] Governor Connally, himself seriously wounded during the assassination, explained that the President's life was taken (rather than his own) in order to shock and stun the nation concerning the cancerous growth of hatred, bigotry, intolerance, indifference, and lawlessness within it, and he commended understanding, reason, tolerance, and knowledge instead.[5] Comments theologian Van Harvey:

> For some, Connally's witness formulated the meaning the entire series of events must have for them . . . in the sense of providing an occasion for resolving once again to embody and foster the self-understanding that was epitomized in the Kennedy image and that Connally represented in his word about the martyred president. And there were those who, then and there, covenanted with themselves and others to preserve just this significance and never again let political slander or bigotry in their city go unchallenged.[6]

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[1] Earl Warren in Fine, That Day With God, p. 187.

[2] G. Edmund Brown cited by David O. Sears, "Effects of the Assassination on Political Partisanship," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 324.

[3] Richard Nixon cited by U.P.I., Four Days, p. 134.

[4] W. A. Morrison cited by U.P.I., Four Days, p. 60.

[5] Harvey, Historian and Believer, pp. 256-257.

[6] Ibid.

- As an illustration of rededication inspired by the Kennedy assassination, Harvey cites the case of a black woman who had not voted in recent years and indeed had previously dismissed the whole of politics as "a white man's affair" but who now came all the way across town by bus in a drenching rain to vote in her old precinct in the 1964 presidential election, saying, "If Kennedy could give his life for our country, then I knew the least I could do was vote."[1]

Many eulogizers, especially among preachers, put Kennedy's vision and dreams forward as an inspiration to others; he might be dead as a man and leader, but as a symbol and source of vision, his example and words lived after him.[2] Charles McKirachan, for instance, calls Kennedy a "symbol of light and life" and a "lofty-spirited patriot with a world vision of equality, blessing, and abundance for all."[3] House Speaker McCormack, in his eulogy, credited Kennedy with "a broad vision which recognized the true values of freedom, equality, and brotherhood which have always been the marks of the American political dreams," posing him as an exemplar of a larger heritage.[4] Emmanuel Rose merely asks us to be "mindful" of Kennedy's dreams, uncritically citing a melange of maxims, chiefly from Kennedy's Inaugural Address, in his sermon: "We will pay any price . . . to assure the survival of liberty. Here on earth God's work must truly be our own. The right of our cause must always underlie our strength. Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."[5]

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[1] Harvey, Historian and Believer, p. 289.

[2] For this theme in the memorial film "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," see Chapter VIII, #7.

[3] McKirachan, "The President Is Dead: God Never Dies," p. 2.

[4] John McCormack in U.P.I., Four Days, p. 130 (text). For a reaffirmation of the heritage apart from Kennedy, see Chapter IX, #2.

[5] Emmanuel Rose in Fine, That Day With God, p. 150.

John H. Miller, Sr., goes one step further in appealing to us to "emulate our fallen chief," knowing that "his work will live on." "His dreams will be realized," Miller continues," and, in a curious mixture of a Christian resurrection motif with the more pagan eternal flame, he asserts, "His spirit will know, for the eternal flame will light the course."[1] Marshall Strickland fully develops the theme of Kennedy as dreamer. Portraying Kennedy as akin to an Old Testament prophet, he asserts, "He heard the voice of destiny call to him from the dim unknown and listened attentively to hear its message," and he goes on to liken Kennedy to the patriarchs of scripture, who, according to the book of Hebrews, died in faith, not having received the promises but seeing them afar off and embracing them. On the international front, according to Strickland, Kennedy dreamed of a world without war and worked toward the first nuclear test ban treaty as his investment in that dream. On the home front, Kennedy used the ideals of America's heritage to measure its progress toward fulfilling the American dream, a dream that cannot be killed but will find new champions for it arising out of Kennedy's martyred blood:

> He dreamed that the greatness of the America of the past could produce an America of the future that would be true to the heritage of our forefathers. He believed that such phrases as *The land of the free and the home of the brave, Government of the people, by the people, and for the people* should not be timeworn expressions alone, but actual measuring rods in the fulfillment of the American Dream.
>
> There are those in our race who believe that his passing marked the end of the Negroes' struggle for equal opportunity. This I do not believe. His martyred blood still nurtures the plants that will produce new champions for our cause. Gone now is the voice, and the physical presence that identified him, but the dreamer remains. The martyred body surrendered itself to the fatal hands of death, but the spirit remains. America will rise above the tragedy of this hour. New voices will champion the cause of freedom, and all men, of every race and creed, will live in a better world because *Kennedy dared to dream*.[2]

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[1] Samuel H. Miller, Jr., in *That Day With God*, p. 123. For the eternal flame, see #D and Chapter VIII, #7, below.

[2] Marshall Strickland in *That Day With God*, pp. 180-182.

XUM

Others also commended Kennedy's dreams for peace and freedom but placed them in the context of all the ills of America and all that needed to be done. Edwin Zerin called on his people to dream what might happen if all the dignitaries, mass media time, and committed concern generated by Kennedy's death could be channeled into life-serving crash programs to eliminate poverty and disease and to promote education, leisure, and employment, hoping to convert the excessive religious outpouring of the assassination weekend into political activity. He called his people to go beyond Kennedy by dreaming dreams and seeing visions for themselves now that he could no longer do so. "The noblest memorial which we can erect in memory to our late President," he concludes, "is to reconsecrate ourselves to the American dream of a nation conceived in liberty. And to the universal vision of a world dedicated to the peace and welfare of mankind."[1] William Sloane Coffin makes a similar point, though with muted criticism of Kennedy: "If we would be true to the best memory of this man, we might now on his behalf with a little more reliance on grace and a little less regard for pressure take up the unfinished business of freedom," e.g., working for true freedom of the press, freedom from poverty and from greed, trivia, and superficiality.[2] The very brevity of Kennedy's life and the dispaity between his rhetoric and his accomplishments was felt as a spur to some, almost as if they could make up for the flaw in him by closing the gap themselves. A Yale student felt "an untold number of things left unfinished but so well articulated by President Kennedy had to be done."[3] Robert Edwards issued a "non-partisan summons" to his congregation to "extend what Kennedy began" in the areas of peace, technology, civil rights, education, care for the aged, recognition of the arts, and space, seeing that Kennedy "could only move a little way in the time that he had," leaving "still nearly everything to be done."[1]

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[1] Edwin Zerin in That Day With God, pp. 182-185.

[2] William Sloane Coffin in That Day With God, p. 101.

[3] Pratt, "Patterns of Closure," p. 182.

Several preachers portrayed Kennedy's work and vision as religious and himself as an exemplary man of faith. Congregationalist pastor Frederick Driftmeir portrayed Kennedy as a religious man, to be respected and trusted for that attribute by men of all faiths, whose church ties enabled him to eschew an overweening archaic civil religion:

> Whether or not one shared his church background, all God-loving people respected his religious convictions. His life was a profile of faith. His was not a religion of superpatriotism or a religion of nationalism; it was a humble faith of a man who learned to love his God at his mother's knees. His was the faith of a man who trusted God to direct the path of his destiny, and all of us had more confidence in him because of that trust.[2]

Likewise, Cardinal Cushing commended Kennedy for his confidence in God and, in a Pauline phrase, for having "fought the good fight for the God-given rights of his fellowman and for a world where peace and freedom still prevail," and he concludes his eulogy with the prayer: "May his memory be perpetuated in our hearts as a symbol of the love of God, country, and all mankind, the foundation upon which a new world must be built if our civilization is to survive."[3] Abraham Akaka also linked national aims with the divine, commending Kennedy because "he gave himself unsparingly in the holy cause of world peace and national security" and reminding his listeners of "Kennedy's personal example and lesson to us: His life had the dimension of eternity in it--the sense of the eternal."[4] Father Joseph Munier did most to build Kennedy up as a man of faith, hailing him as "the man of religious principle, the President of genuine Christian commitment." In his view, Kennedy had identified his thoughts, words, and actions with the work of God when he knelt at Mass before his inauguration; just as he had said in his Inaugural Address (and in his farewell to Massachusetts, which Munier also cites), "God's work was truly his own," as even Pope Paul VI had confirmed in noting the spontaneous harmony between the declarations of John Kennedy and those of Pope John XXIII on the dignity of the human person. God's word was his, Munier continues, as Kennedy cited scripture in his appeals to Congress and to the United Nations for equal human rights, and God's work was his as he regarded the needs of the poor, the victims of discrimination, and the culturally deprived. Before His judgment seat, Munier avers, God certainly told Kennedy, in the words of Jesus' parable, to take possession of the Kingdom for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and caring for the sick. The martyrdom of this paragon of religion has indeed had a "remarkable redemptive quality," concludes Munier, "since it has turned more Americans than ever to God in prayer."[1] Similarly, William Kelligar hails Kennedy as a Catholic leader dedicated to healing the divisions among men, whose work against racial discrimination and for a stronger United Nations, for underdeveloped nations, and for freer immigration laws mirrored papal teaching. His work is unfinished, but his death will improve its chances of success, Kelligar concludes:

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[1] Robert Edwards in That Day With God, p. 110.

[2] Frederick Driftmeir in That Day With God, p. 40.

[3] Richard Cardinal Cushing, "Eulogy," in Murray, Legacy of an Assassination, p. 8,o& in Fine, That Day With God (Preface), p. vii.

[4] Abraham Akaka in That Day With God, pp. 46-47.

> The efforts he began will have even greater chance of success because his life was taken suddenly. The spiritual values he relied upon as guiding principles will be diffused more widely because his life was taken suddently. The virtue of faith whhich infused his work will be all the stronger among men who recall his memory because his life was taken suddenly.[2]

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[1] Joseph Munier in That Day With God, pp. 163-164. For statistics on prayer, see #1C, above; for the role of the "two Johns" in a revival of Catholic participation in American public life, see Chapter I, #3, above.

[2] William Kelligar in That Day With God, pp. 170-171.

Many others also held that Kennedy's death was not in vain, but a source of good, a view which is indeed the ultimate recovery from the loss since it transforms it into a gain. Reinhold Niebuhr entertained the possibility that Kennedy's death "might prove more important than his life in completing the unfinished task of restoring the moral integrity of our nation" in the field of civil rights.[1] Highlighting the purpose of reliving the events of the assassination weekend through reading a memorial book as "less to commemorate a departed President than to dedicate ourselves," Bruce Catton asserts that death put an end to Kennedy alone:

> When the army bugler sent the haunting notes of "Taps" across that grave in Arlington Cemetery, he sounded a long goodbye and a commitment to eternal rest to John F. Kennedy. For the rest of us, that was the trumpet of dawn itself.[2]

The Son of God summons Kennedy to arise, says John S. Kennedy, but in another sense he also summons us to "arise from rancorousness, spite, anger, and hatred to sanity, charity, and brotherhood."[3] "He will not have died in vain," asserts Julius Mark, "if we, the citizens of the United States, of all races, colors, parties, religions, dedicate ourselves to the sacred task of rooting out every vestige of hatred, prejudice, and bigotry from our hearts and do what lies in us to make strong the foundations of a land and world wherein every man shall live in peace under his own vine and fig tree."[4] Bartine Sherman exhorts us to replace Kennedy. Having lost one "committed to the principle of the freedom of man under God," he says, "let us commit ourselves more firmly to the same principle, to the end that the glorious liberty of the sons of God may be realized in the life of every man, of whatever race or creed or political persuasion."[1] With Kennedy's soul in the hands of God and his heritage in the hearts of the people, Grayson Kirk pleads for the resolution that the sacrifice was not vainly made, that out of our national sorrow may come some good, that from the shrine of this bloodstained soil in Arlington there may come a chastened and better America.[2]

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr in That Day With God, p. 90.

[2] Bruce Catton, "Preface," in U.P.I., Four Days, p. 5.

[3] John S. Kennedy in That Day With God, p. 103.

[4] Julius Mark in That Day With God, p. 92.

Such Lincolnesque language was not at all uncommon. Roger Frederickson hails President Kennedy as having given "the last full measure" and pleads with his people to rely on the grace of God which is summoning them to greater tasks, summed up by Kennedy in his Inaugural Address:

> Now the trumpet summons us again--not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need--not as a call to battle though embattled we are--but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation--a struggle against the common enemies of man! Tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.[3]

Charles McKirachan also saw Kennedy as having given "the last full measure of devotion" and predicted that "his dying will raise a thousand-thousand to follow in his steps." His dying gives Kennedy's vision "cosmic significance" and summons new legions to follow it:

> There burned in his brain the vision of a nation, strong, whole, united, all together brave and resolute, facing every situation which degraded life until they were eliminated, that every citizen of this land should achieve what he sought for himself--"the full realization of all his powers for the highest goals." He called every citizen of this mighty land to be content with no less than a completely free, thoroughly just, and spiritually sensitive society of fellow-citizens and workers for the common good. His dying places these goals and objectives in a cosmic reference and historic perspective. His death has brought suddenly into clear significance the meaning and purpose of our national life. His words, "The world cannot abide half free and half slave," will reverberate through the corridors of all our tomorrows and summon new legions of loyal sons of liberty.[4]

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[1] Bartine Sherman in That Day With God, p. 92.

[2] Grayson Kirk in That Day With God, pp. 85, 88.

[3] Roger Frederickson in That Day With God, p. 118.

[4] McKirachan, "The President Is Dead: God Never Dies," p. 3.

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McKirachan ends by quoting Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, replete with its calls for the living to be rededicated to unfinished work, to take increasing devotion to the cause of freedom in response to the last full measure of devotion by the dead, resolved that the dead have not died in vain and that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, enduring as a people's government.[1] Edgar Magnin goes one step further, identifying Kennedy with Lincoln and proclaiming dedication to their cause:

> By their life and tragic death we rededicate ourselves toward creating a better America and a better world, . . . a sane and sensible society with freedom and justice for all. . . . Good-by, dear friend (Kennedy), God take your precious soul under the shadow of His wing and give you perfect rest. We who are still among the living will march forward shoulder to shoulder--white, colored, Jew, and Christian--toward creating a kind of America and world for which you lived and died.[2]

Again, the need to recover quickly from the strain of the assassination left little room or energy for critical thinking. In order to redeem the event and to prevent President Kennedy from having "died in vain," he was made to stand for a great many "worthy" things and a posthumous obedience to him was advocated which knew no bounds. That Kennedy had stood for some bad things and had failed to stand for some good things and, all in all, had not stood for much was forgotten in the overwhelming urge to identify with his supposed values though perhaps it was reflected in the platitudinous character of many of the exhortations. For instance, Frederick Driftmeir claimed that Kennedy's faithfulness to religion had prevented him from being a nationalist, but he was wrong on both counts. As we have noted, Kennedy was not interested in religion and, while he indulged in a lofty rhetoric of dreams, he was singularly lacking in an operant political vision except perhaps toward the end of his life.[3] And he had been an archaic nationalist with some growing modifications of that stance. Yet many of the preachers as they identified with Kennedy, resurrected the old rather than the "emergent" Kennedy, drawing on words from his past. Emmanuel Rose repeated the archaic pledge to pay any price for the survival of liberty. Abraham Akaka archaically lumped together world peace and national security as a holy cause--in contrast, for instance, to the more historic subsequent Presbyterian Confession of 1967, which separated the two and advocated seeking reconciliation among nations at a risk to national security. Globalizing the sentiments of the American Civil War, Charles McKirachan saw Kennedy summoning new legions to prevent the world from remaining half slave and half free while Kennedy had been moving away from his former position toward a world of diversity in which all would not be required to be recipients of American "freedom" under a _Pax Americana_ policed by the United States. The obvious character of many of the goods--such as "peace" and "freedom"--advocated in Kennedy's name (and of the evils opposed--such as hatred and bigotry) indicates an archaic level of thinking and desire for unification in contrast to historic thinking--which would be more concerned about the ambiguities of both good and evil in light of a transcendent perspective--and to modern thinking--which would be more concerned about the relative usefulness to various groups of specific measures. A few clergy, e.g., Edwin Zerin and William Sloane Coffin, reacted to the assassination with some critical distance and advocated that its archaic religious energy be converted into historic-modern political programs. But extraordinary events outside of politics rarely give birth to ordinary political action, just as all the talk about the technological feat of the moon shot proving the possibility of crash programs against political ills only raised false expectations. Still, identification with Kennedy did contribute to the passage of some legislation he had advocated.

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[1] McKirachan, "The President Is Dead: God Never Dies," p. 4.

[2] Edgar Magnin in That Day With God, p. 161.

[3] See Chapters I, #1, #3; IV, #3; VI, #5, #6.

XUM

D. Ceremonialization More than the windy words which idealized Kennedy and exhorted identification with him, the funereal ceremonies which concluded the assassination weekend served to complete the process of recovery, speaking in a rich symbolic language to the depths of souls disturbed by the tragedy and etching themselves deep in memory. All of America's civil and ecclesiastical religious resources were mustered for the occasion. In celebrating the President's funeral, Americans pulled out all the stops, resulting in some assessments of it as being too rich in meaning. What emerged was, in Manchester's words, "a strange, incongruous blend of old world mysticism and American tradition."[1] Uniting what Max Weber distinguished as the religion of war and the religion of brotherhood,[2] the event was both military and ecclesial, the jibing together of a state funeral and a Catholic funeral.

The basic frame was a military state funeral, moving in procession from the nation's Capitol to the graveyard of its war heroes with the Catholic funeral and graveside ceremony integrated into it. Each had its own peculiar stamp. The state funeral, reserved for Presidents and five-star generals and admirals, was based on precedents from previous presidential funerals, chiefly Lincoln's.[3] The Catholic funeral, the first for an American President, was based on its own ancient traditions, some fixed, some adaptable to the present and to the military context. The two harmonized completely because the Catholic funeral focused only on the person of John Kennedy while the state funeral focused only on his office. The church did

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 586, 602.

[2] Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 335-336.

[3] For identification of Kennedy with Lincoln, see Chapter VIII, #7.

XUM

not preach its full Gospel, its public and private faith, but largely neglected its own historic civil religion (which even in Catholic form relates to the public order as an inferior but significant plane),[1] leaving the field almost entirely--except for some uninterpreted scriptures chosen because of their association with Kennedy--to archaic militaristic civil religion. Manchester comments on the militaristic overtones of the entire proceedings:

> It was ironic that John Kennedy, whom the world knew as a man of peace, should be buried as a warrior, but there really was no other way; if he must go in glory, and clearly he must, the troops were indispensable. There were no splendid traditions, no magnificent farewells for a hero of peace.[2]

It has always been thus in America--a state funeral is a military and militaristic funeral. Armies march. Military bands play military-religious hymns (such as the Navy Hymn)[3] and militant church hymns (such as "Onward Christian Soldiers"), giving religious sanction to militarism. Cannons fire and jets streak over and taps are played and the flag, symbol of the nation but pre-eminently of the nation at war (e.g., as the national anthem celebrates it) is handed to the widow. It was such a state funeral which provided the basic frame in which Americans ceremonialized the loss of their Commander-in-Chief with some church religion sandwiched neatly in.

The first act of the funereal drama belonged to the state and its symbols. After Jacqueline, Robert, and Edward Kennedy had prayed by Kennedy's bier for ten minutes, the coffin containing John Kennedy's body was carried down the steps of the Capitol at 10:50 A.M. Monday morning and placed on the gun carriage to the strains of "Hail to the Chief" and "O God of Loveliness" played by the Coast Guard Academy Band."[4] The gun carriage was integrated into an elaborate military procession. Major General Philip C. Wehle, military commander of Washington, D.C., led the procession, followed by seventeen companies from the armed forces, some veterans, and three military bands. Within the cortege itself, the coffin-bearing gun carriage--drawn by six gray white horses (three of them riderless) and flanked by four men from each of the armed services (some of the black)--was preceded by a special honor guard, two military detachments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff,[1] presidential military aides, the national flag, and clergy;[2] it was followed by the President's personal flag, a riderless horse (Black Jack), the Kennedy family, President Johnson, and other dignitaries.[3] The procession moved away from the Capitol to the Marine Band's rendition of "Our Fallen Heroes," bound for the White House by the same route John Kennedy had taken on his inauguration day.

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[1] Troeltsch, Social Teachings, ch. 2.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 594.

[3] Ibid., p. 419 (Manchester was very moved by it). [4] Ibid., p. 577.

Bands played "Holy, Holy, Holy," "The Vanished Army," "Onward Christian Soldiers," "Vigor in Arduis," funeral marches by Beethoven and Hall, and, as the procession approached the White House, Chopin's funeral march, capped off with "America the Beautiful."[4] As the Annapolis choir sang "The Londonderry Air" and "Eternal Father" from the White House lawn, the cortege moved onto the White House driveway, and the dignitaries alit from their limousines to assemble for the walk to the church funeral at St. Matthew's Cathedral. Behind the Kennedys, the Johnsons, and the limousine with the Kennedy children, a delegation of two hundred foreign leaders took shape, fronted by heads of state President Lübke of West Germany, President Charles de

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[1] The Joint Chiefs are referred to as "symbols of the vast power that could not save him" in a memorial book: A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 93.

[2] A Catholic priest, Jewish rabbi, and Protestant minister (Ibid., p. 71).

[3] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 139; Manchester, Death, p. 537.

[4] Altogether thirty hymns were played during the funereal ceremonies; Manchester, Death, p. 486.

Gaulle of France, Queen Frederika of Greece, King Baudouin of Belgium, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, President Chung Hee Park of South Korea, and President Diosdido Macapagal of the Phillipines (Ireland's President Eamon de Valera marched farther back). Altogethr ninety-two nations were represented in the funeral procession with eight heads of state, ten prime ministers, and most of the world's remaining royalty present.[1] Behind the foreign delegation marched the Justices of the Supreme Court, members of the Cabinet, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, Presidential assistants, Kennedy's friends, White House servants, and other mourners. To the boom of church bells the shrill skirl of bagpipes was added as the Scottish Black Watch took its place near the front of the cortege as the procession moved from the White House toward St. Matthew's Cathedral.[1]

As the procession approached St. Matthew's, those in the Cathedral heard muffled drums and the faint sounds of a dirge and then the choristers within singing Latin airs centuries old and then the drums and over them the bagpipes and then again the choir and then again the drums and then the band playing "Hail to the Chief."[2] The sounds were intermixed, symbolizing the juxtaposition of military and ecclesiastical funerals, intersecting now and overlapping. Richard Cardinal Cushing, who had officiated at the Kennedy wedding and inauguration, awaited the procession outside the cathedral clad in black and red vestments with a white mitre. When the band finished playing "Hail to the Chief" and began the hymn "Pray for the Dead," the Cardinal kissed Mrs. Kennedy, let her kneel and kiss his episcopal ring--a gesture he would ordinarily have discouraged in deference to a separation of church and state forgotten this weekend[1]—and shepherded her into the church. The Cardinal returned outside, followed by an acolyte holding a crucifix, for the traditional antiphon and psalm for the dead, sprinkling holy water on the coffin at the entrance to the cathedral. Ending the entrance ritual with "et lux perpetua luceat ei" (and let perpetual light shine upon him), the archbishop kissed the flag and stepped aside as the Kennedy coffin was put onto a church truck and wheeled into the cathedral.

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 499-500, 580-581; U.P.I., Four Days, pp. 108, 139.

[2] White, Making President 1964, p. 29.

"In pageantry, the military takes second place only to the church," writes Manchester.[2] Now it was the church's turn to add to the ceremonialization of the President's passing from its own sacred treasures. The very venerableness of its traditions expressed in an ancient foreign language may have contributed to the dignity of the occasion and to the power of the funeral to re-root and to heal. Writes White:

> Century upon century of liturgy and faith have graven these Latin words in this form, have taught this high priest (Cushing) the melancholy drone that now fills the air, have instructed singers in the sad melodies that now and then break the service. This is ritual—a poultice on the memory and on the hurt.[3]

Yet some of the most moving parts of the service for many were words Cardinal Cushing spoke when he broke into English in his funeral benediction and in the graveside ceremony. Adapted to American soil and to the widow's wishes, the pontifical requiem mass offered for Kennedy was a low mass without the lengthy five absolutions to which, as the Apostolic Delegate argued, a Catholic head of state is entitled.[4]

When all had been seated in the Cathedral to the choral singing of the Gregorian "Subvenite" and its bronze doors shut, the crucifer returned the cross to the altar, followed by Cardinal Cushing and then by the casket while tenor Luigi Vena sang "Pie Jesu." His Eminence began the Mass, in Latin, with the traditional trinitarian formula and versicle from Psalm 42 and then proceeded through the Kyrie, Psalm 129, a reading from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, the Dies Irae, the Gospel reading, and so forth to the consecration of the Host. Few besides the immediate family took Communion. At the conclusion of the service,[1] Bishop Philip N. Hannan, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, D.C., mounted the pulpit.

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[1] See #A, above. [2] Manchester, Death, p. 144.

[3] White, Making President 1964, p. 30.

[4] Manchester, Death, p. 558.

Addressing the Kennedy family, the heads and lesser officials of the states represented, and the princes of the church, Bishop Hannan readd several passages of scripture which Kennedy had used in his speeches, as requested by the family which had selected them: 1) a combination of passages from Joel and Proverbs exhorting the need for vision which Kennedy had uttered in Houston the night before his assassination; 2) a plea for perseverence drawn from Matthew's Gospel which he had addressed to the United Nations; 3) the Joshua-Isaiah amalgam abjuring fear and promising strength to those who wait upon the Lord which he had used in accepting the Presidential nomination; and, finally, 4) from Proverbs, the recognition of the need for strength to be undergirded by righteousness and of the vanity of building a city without the Lord's guardianship which he had prepared for the speech he did not live to give in Dallas. Then Bishop Hannan read a longer favorite Kennedy passage from the third chapter of Ecclesiastes, including the notion of there being a time to be born and a time to die. While several of these scriptures express the prophetic side of Biblical civil religion, nothing was made of it as the bishop

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 582, 548, 586-587. Manchester says fourteen minutes elapsed between Mrs. Kennedy's taking of Communion and the Bishop's rising; he mentions the "Sanctus" and the "Benedictus" being sung in the interval which is out of the usual order but possible in this case.

XUM

turned to a recital of Kennedy's own word which were in quite a different vein. Robert Kennedy had wanted a more pointed passage, a reading of the Beatitudes with its blessing on peacemakers, included in the funeral service as testimony to his brother's work on the test ban treaty which Robert regarded as John's supreme achievement, but he was overruled, and, in addition to all the military pomp in the procession, even the subsequent reading from the "Gospel according to Kennedy" had a militaristic ring despite a few germs of historic civil religion.[1] As a "final expression of his ideals and aspirations," Bishop Hannan concluded by reading most of the beginning and ending of Kennedy's Inaugural Address, repeating the familiar words expressing the commitment to pay any price to assure the survival and success of liberty, the trumpet summons to fight tyranny, poverty, disease, and war, and the call to Americans to light the world with energy, faith, and devotion, not asking what their country can do for them but what they can do for their country, with God's help and blessing making his work truly their own.

The eulogy finished, Cardinal Cushing circled the bier three times sprinkling it with smoking incense and holy water as the people recited the Lord's Prayer. Having prayed, in Latin, for the deliverance of Kennedy's soul from everlasting death into eternal rest and light, he switched to English for a benediction:

> May the angels, dear Jack, lead you into Paradise. May the martyrs receive you at your coming. May the spirit of God embrace you, and mayest thou, with all those who made the supreme sacrifice of dying for others, receive eternal rest and peace. Amen.[2]

The Mass concluded, the band played "Hail to the Chief" for the last time for President Kennedy as his coffin was carried out of the church and blessed by Cardinal Cushing (now dressed in scarlet vestments and mitre) before being affixed again to the gun carriage. As the casket left the church, Kennedy's son John saluted it. The band then played "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name" as the prelates, the family, and the dignitaries assembled in limousines for the hour-and-a-quarter ride to the national cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, chosen above Kennedy's parochial, predominantly Catholic Boston homeland because now he "belonged to the nation."[1]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 550. For an analysis of Kennedy's Inaugural Address in terms of strains of civil religion within it, see Chapter II, #3.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 589.

At Arlington cemetery, the Marine Band played ruffles and flourishes for President Johnson as an introduction to the national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner," and then, as the Air Force bagpipers played the dirge, "Mist-Covered Mountain," John Kennedy's coffin was raised from the caisson and placed into his grave with the flag which had covered the coffin held waist-high above it by the casket team. Fifty jets, one for each state in the Union, shrieked overhead in a flyover, followed by Air Force One, the President's personal jet. When the Irish cadets, their rifle butts reversed in mourning for Ireland's martyrs, had completed their silent drill, Cardinal Cushing began the committal service in English. After the opening trinitarian formula, the Cardinal asked God's blessing on the grave and on the President's body and prayed that "his soul may rejoice in Thee with all saints through Christ our Lord." He proceeded with the announcement of God's promise to raise up a horn of salvation for us (from the prophecy of John the Baptist in Luke 1) and with Johannine assurances of resurrection through faith in Jesus, interspersed with a prayer for eternal rest and a Kyrie and capped off with the Lord's Prayer. Finally, the archbishop prayed the Lord to deliver Kennedy's soul from the gates of hell, not punishing him for any misdeeds but in mercy making him a companion of the holy angels in heaven. After a twenty-one-gun salute had been fired, his Eminence sprinkled holy water on the coffin while the casket team tilted up the flag. The final, hallowed sequence of military "honors," which had been bent to include the Cardinal's benediction, left no room for further interruption by the words Robert Kennedy had intended to say,[1] but continued with three volleys of rifle fire and the playing of taps. After the Marine Band played the chorus of "Eternal Father" thrice while the casket team folded the flag, Cardinal Cushing blessed the torch, pine boughs, and copper tubing set up for the eternal flame with the prayer "Ad Omnia," and then, after the flag had been presented to Mrs. Kennedy, she lit the eternal flame with the gesture repeated by Kennedy's surviving brothers Robert and Ted.[2]

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 99. Revealing vestiges of a continuing outgroup mentality, Sargent Shriver checked to make sure there was no rule prohibiting a Catholic burial in a national cemetery; Manchester, Death, p. 381. Presidents are customarily buried in their home states, not in the *axis mundi*; even Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, who are memorialized there, are buried elsewhere; Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 2: see Chapter VIII.

The assassination weekend was bound to be ceremonialized. As we noted in connection with the Kennedy inauguration—of which the Kennedy funeral was a sad recapitulation in reverse[3]—the transfer of power is always a momentous, sacred time, accompanied by ceremony in every culture. Likewise, every culture ceremonializes death. But the assassination of a President combines an instant and unexpected transfer of power with a most extraordinary death, experienced as a breach in the social order, making the need for ceremony overwhelming.

The modern mentality has no resources with which to deal with an assassination; death does not fit into its calculus of interests but rather falls off the scale. Death is not rational, and the modernist can only

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[1] Manchester explains: "'Honors' in a military funeral are the entire sequence of artillery, riflery, and music which pays homage to the departed. The one inviolable rule about honors is that once they have begun they cannot be interrupted;" Death, p. 599.

[2] Ibid., pp. 596-601; U.P.I., Four Days, pp. 120, 142-143 (texts).

[3] A frequent theme in memorial books, e.g., A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 79.

"regress" to acknowledge repressed parts of his psyche in dealing with death or hope for as speedy as possible a return to business as usual after its intrusion.

For both archaic and historic civil religion, however, death and even assassination has special significance which they are prepared to ceremonialize. In archaic civil religion, death in battle is seen as the highest expression of uncritical devotion to the nation as divine; it is a consecrated act, whose meaning is unquestionable, never "in vain," but always covered by the standard formula of "giving one's life for one's country," which can then be extended to hallow less inherently sacred deaths.[1] The military knows a singleness of purpose, hierarchically determined and enforced, and a sacred fraternity of comrades in arms which is often a model for a nation seeking unity and common commitment in an archaic frame,[2] and, despite its posters to the contrary, it is in the business of death and knows how to deal with danger and disaster and the shocking but expected intrusion of death, reacting with a well-regulated discipline, nerves of steel, and a ready ritual, which is completely bound—for the assassination of a President as for the death of a common soldier in battle, to which the former is assinilated—by precedent in an archaic fasion.

In historic civil religion (of Catholic Christian type), death in witness to one's faith is seen as the highest expression of unconditional devotion to Christ as divine; it is also a consecrated act, whose meaning is questionable,[3] but also continually renewed by the church's repeated re-presentation of the body and blood of its revolutionary first-century founder and by the blood of the martyrs which is the seed of its growth; in their light, the death of an ordinary Christian is regularly surmounted with the symbol of the cross and is often covered with the Biblical formula of "laying down one's life for one's friends," or, as Cushing put it in his benediction for Kennedy, as making "the supreme sacrifice of dying for others." The church also knows a unity of purpose and a holy brotherhood, originally of disciples who left all to follow a master who refused to lord it over them like the Gentiles, calling them not slaves but friends, but subsequently of members less committed under the suzerainty of successive vicars of Christ who wielded less authority with greater authoritativeness.[1] And the church is no stranger to sin and death, finding often in persecution and calamity a revival of its faith under fire as the fragility of earthly power is exposed before an eternal backdrop.[2] Indeed, in contrast to the pre-Christian German belief that a warrior who dies in battle automatically goes straight to Valhalla, the church is officially conceded to hold the keys to the gates of heaven and hell, so that the military no longer knows how to do a funeral without its help at the level of words.

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[1] Cf. Weber, From Max Weber, pp. 335-336. This process was not only obviously extended to Kennedy (see Chapter VIII, #5, below) but is also the fundamental dynamic in Memorial Day graveyard ceremonies; Warner, Family of God.

[2] For unification during the assassination weekend, see #A, above; for the unification which Kennedy sought, often using military motifs, see Chapters I, #2; II, #3; VI, #3, among others.

[3] In contrast to the military mold ("Their's not to reason why / Their's but to do or die" in Tennyson's lines), Thomas a Beckett seeks to avoid doing the right deed for the wrong reason in T. S. Eliot's portrayal.

The church, however, within its own part of the funereal ceremonies which it had to share with the military, could have done more to proclaim its own historic civil religion rather than allowing the amount of archaic civil religion to be increased as it bowed to the wishes of the family, led by Jacqueline, and to national sentiment. Though the church is blessed with greater flexibility in ritual than the military (in keeping with its more historic mentality), it is significant that it was the fixed parts of the funeral Mass, reminding us of Kennedy's mortality and sins, which kept historic civil religion alive while the Cardinal's electives were all uncritically positive, using Kennedy's favorite scriptures and quoting his words as the real sermon of the day, perhaps even suggesting to some listeners that Kennedy was a "horn of salvation" in the graveside ceremony which he substituted for the traditional form and blessing, on request, the eternal flame materials, which had nothing to do with his tradition but were, if White's imagination is sound, rooted in archaic Gaelic custom.[1] Central to the church's service was not the church's message but the words of (an earlier) John Kennedy, summed up in his militaristic inaugural boast to defend liberty at any cost. Thus did John Kennedy—as Cardinal Cushing put it the previous day in his eulogy after also citing passages from the Inaugural Address—"in unforgettable language," write, with the re-iteration of clergy in sacred service, "his own epitaph."[2]

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[1] In its present state, Weber sees the religion of brotherhood rarely matching the religion of war in fervor; From Max Weber, pp. 335-336. According to Troeltsch, some compromise was inevitable in a continuing earthly world; the ideal of the holy brotherhood was preserved in monasteries in the Catholic compromise. Historic patterns of church government have been too variable to make any quick generalization paralleling the use of the military as a model for national unity (Presbyterians like to think that the American, federal constitutional system was modeled on its church polity; Catholic canon law, bureaucracy, and elections have influenced civil systems).

[2] For words of Cushing and others to this effect, see Chapter IX, #2.

E. Catharsis The loss of its President left America with a staggering task of social re-integration. Yet in short order, its citizens "overcame their shock, expiated their grief, and returned to old responsibilities in a new situation" under a new chief.[3] Unlike most of the world's crises in which a change of chief executive is occasioned by violence, the events of November 22-25 brought Americans together rather than driving them apart.[4] Even if, as a rule, crises in America tend to be integrative, it is not always so here. For instance, recovery after Lincoln's assassination was both slow and incomplete, marked by destructive cross-currents of group blame and guilt.[1] Why was recovery from Kennedy's assassination apparently so swift and so complete in the United States?

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 30; for the symbolism in the eternal flame, see Chapter VIII, #7.

[2] Richard Cardinal Cushing in That Day With God, p. 36.

[3] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 7. [4] Ibid., p. 21.

The funereal ceremonies certainly played a key role in the completion of the process but only as a welcome culmination of more painful phases. An important factor in rapid recovery was concerted mourning, hour after hour, deep, intense, reinforced by others.[2] Grief research has shown that those who get their "grief work" done right away are most likely to recover quickly and fully. The same phenomenon seems to be operating here. Barber figured that the service club workers whom he observed avoiding emotional expression would be more prone to unresolved tensions and slow recovery.[3] Europeans, who, as a whole, participated less directly in the assassination weekend, tended to recover more slowly, keeping conspiracy theories alive the following year while Americans went about their business.[4] Americans showed an unusual pre-occupation with death, which, far from being "morbid," had positive mental health consequences, such as a decline in self-inflicted death; Los Angeles County, which averages thirteen suicides per weekend, reports none for the assassination weekend,[5] a finding that confirms Durkheim's theory that suicide is reduced during wartime or other periods of intense social involvement. As we noted, people used the occasion to release uncompleted mourning for their own dead. Going into grief and coming

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 357; Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," pp. 112, 122.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 112. [3] *Ibid*., p. 120.

[4] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 21. Some Europeans were amazed that America could wrap up the assassination in three days; Manchester, *Death*, p. 379.

[5] Dr. Edwin S. Shneidman, reported out at a suicide conference; Wolfenstein, *Children and Death*, pp. xix-xx.

XUM

out on the other side, many Americans beneficially experienced what the Dallas Times-Herald called the "terrible cleansing power of grief."[1]

Catharsis was accomplished partly through face-to-face communication. The research process itself was therapeutic in this regard. Wesleyan students, Greenstein found, wanted to talk; interviews had a "cathartic, confessional quality."[2] William Sloane Coffin commented in his sermon, "By talking about a loss that seemed unbearable we are learning that it is bearable."[3] Direct participation in the weekend's events was also therapeutic. "I never realized the function of a funeral before," observed Schlesinger; "it is to keep people from going to pieces," and Byron White found marching a "great surge of relief."[4] Yet it was television-viewing that carried the main burden. Watching "only made you more depressed," said one Minneapolis resident, "but it helped you realize things were O.K. and got it out of your system."[5] Schramm writes of the televised funeral:

> Being shown symbols and events—the flag-draped casket, the young widow and the children, the terrible slow drumbeat of the funeral march—gave them an opportunity to experience a real catharsis of grief, . . . a purging of impure and excessive emotions. . . . The viewers were purging themselves of their burden of grief and anger by going through acts of mourning, much as they might have done for a family bereavement. . . . They were going to a funeral.[6]

Seeing the funeral on television, rather than in person, did not reduce its impact much, for, as Manchester points out, a "state funeral is essentially high theatre," well-suited to the television medium.[7] Yet the ceremonies were "more than a spectacle," contends Theodore White; "they were a political and psychological event of measureless dimensions," which people not only watched, but also in which they had a feeling of participating.[1] "The tragic sweep of the ceremony" was seen as a "triumph of majesty" by the national audience; the semblance of form grew and grew over the weekend until the country's sense of pride and majesty was restored at Monday's state funeral, the nationally televised funeral providing a "properly dignified and ceremonious conclusion for the emotions of the week-end."[2] Said a Wesleyan student: "Everything else had been so senseless, so lacking in form or anything. At least, here were people bearing up under something and carrying this thing to a conclusion; there was a little bit of nobility to this whole thing."[3] Said a Minneapolis respondent: "Friday night it was a feeling of being shocked almost to the point of disbelief. And by Monday night there was a feeling of peace and the end of its all, the funeral having taken place."[4] Apparently, the funeral helped people to wrap it up. It reduced tension and concern markedly and turned people to a new state of affairs without John Kennedy.[5] The televised funeral served as a "catalyst to speed up adjustment to the finality of the President's death and renewed faith in the future," Mindak claims.[6] Said a Wesleyan student:

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 132.

[2] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 194.

[3] William Sloane Coffin in That Day With God, p. 100.

[4] Manchester, Death, pp. 555, 581.

[5] Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 138.

[6] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 23-24.

[7] Manchester, Death, p. 571.

> It's funny that the funeral function . . . really had its effect on me. . . . I was so affected by this thing, watching television day in and day out, hour after hour. I began to realize, okay, Kennedy is dead and on we go.[7]

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 24; Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 134.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 571, 242; Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 140.

[3] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 237.

[4] Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 140.

[5] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," pp. 196-197.

[6] Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 141.

[7] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 237.

Said a Minneapolis respondent, with a hint of a resurrection image: "I remember feeling like a tragic weekend was over, and it was a kind of relief. It seemed like a new week had started, new life for a lot of people."[1]

The third day since Kennedy was assassinated brought considerable relief. The archaic depths which the assassination had stirred up had been spoken to by the rich symbols of the military and the church, and, while the pain was not gone, it was at least covered over, fueling a long-term process of memorialization.[2] On the modern level, the people were ready to get back down to business, according Kennedy's successor at least a fair chance to prove his faithfulness and his mettle.[3] In between, at the historic level, the people had again been shortchanged, catching only occasional glimpses of a vision which was conversant both with death and with life, which could maintain a dialogue between the depths and the surface, which could face loss without being overwhelmed by it and cherish unity and heroism without giving in fully to them.

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[1] Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 140.

[2] See Chapter VIII.

[3] See Chapter IX.

CHAPTER VIII

MEMORIALIZATION

Take this death in your arms,
Lift it to your shoulders, easy now.
Carry it past the town,
Carry it past the ravine,
Raise it to the mesa, easy now.
Easy now.
Make a mound of stones.
Leave it to the sun.
A death came out of the West.
Let the legend begin.
--Myron LeVoy

The weekend of the assassination of President Kennedy was unusually memorable in its intrusion, its anguish, its ceremony, its meaning. People remembered where they were when they heard the news, how they felt, what they saw, and they were left with a host of images deep in their subconscious. The assassination spoke to a depth which left one super-impressionable until the abyss was covered over and normalcy resumed. Rather like the imprinting to which a duck is specially vulnerable at a very early age, the assassination weekend appears to have been such an unusual and intense time that its tone and key events stuck in people's minds, poignant and unassimilable. People could not simply dispose of that death which had exposed them to their own depths but felt bound to carry it with them, to clothe it in the shrouds of ancient imagery, and to cover it over not merely with a mound of stones but with memorials of monumental scope, giving to the spirit of John Kennedy a prolonged and tender burial in their minds as they had given his body swift and dreadful burial in the earth.

It was not easy to go on, for the assassination weekend had been no

XUM

ordinary time. Ordinary time was broken into, suspended, hung heavy, was sacralized. The immediate sense, at least, was that this event just would not fit into the flow of history. "American history would be punctuated forever by this bloody date," wrote Theodore White.[1] Echoing Adlai Stevenson's remark at the United Nations, White exclaims that no man at the final graveside ceremony for Kennedy "but bore his mark--and would until the day he died."[2] "Those days and nights had brought to the Ameerican people a Gethsemene of the spirit," wrote Grosvenor, "which time has assuaged but not erased."[3] There was no getting over it entirely, no complete recovery from this catastrophe, no way to envelop it in a tidy scheme.[4] David Brinkley concluded that the assassination and its aftermath were unfathomable:

> The events of those days don't fit, you can't place them anywhere, they don't go in the intellectual baggage of out time. It was too big, too sudden, too overwhelming, and it meant too much. It has to be separate and apart.[5]

In some respects, Manchester wrote with characteristic exaggeration, these were "the most extraordinary hours in the history of our country."[6]

One way in which these hours were extraordinary was in their being transparent to the past. Standing separate and apart from the ordinary moving present, the boundary between present and past was broken in these hours. As in the "everywhen" of primitive Australian religious ritual, the profane present was superceded by the dominion of sacred ancestral archetypes in all thaar fullness. It was a time of B-cognitions, to use Maslow's term, focusing on meanings rather than problems, and fueled by mythic imagination. In this crisis, society's primordial emotional commitments and constitutive elements were exposed; we were "possessed by what we now no more possess;" and the pull of myth increased tenfold.[1]

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 14. [2] Ibid., p. 31.

[3] Grosvenor, "Last Full Measure," p. 355.

[4] For incomplete recovery and refusal of explanations, see Chapter IX, #1.

[5] Manchester, Death, p. 627. [6] Ibid., p. x.

The invasion of the sacred past into the present was enhanced by the use of forms ancient and foreign in the funereal ceremonies: the Latin of the Mass, the strange skirling of the bagpipes, the quaint sight of the Army's Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps clad in Revolutionary uniforms replete with three-cornered hats and powdered wigs, the haunting sounds of the Navy Hymn and "Hail to the Chief" played at dirge adagio, and, finally, the atavistic lighting of the eternal flame, "calling to the blood, an echo of the tribal life of primitive Gaels and Celts before Christianity gentled them, attempting to postpone the moment of the loss of the tribal chief."[2] But the chief atavisms to catch the imagination of poets and commentators were Black Jack--the riderless horse with boots facing backward from his saddle, prancing and willful, reminiscent of the legends of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane[3]--and the sound, between noise and music, of the drums, interspersed with the clopping of horses' hoofs.

There was a special pathos in the drums, described as "the dreadful stutter of muffled drums," "the terrible drums," "the terrible slow drum beat of the funeral march" leading to catharsis, "always, always, the throb of muffled drums," "the doomsday echo of the drums."[4] The unnatural slowness with which the drums (and dirges) were played, coupled with the unbearable stillness into which it intruded, gave a "spooky" quality as if time itself were slowed and suspended in the wake of an inescapable and inevitable recurring catastrophe. Ammons limns:

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 349; Manchester, Death, p. 226; Knight, "Death of J.K.," p. 18. For effects of possession in terms of rededication and posthumous obedience, see Chapters VII, #3C and IX, #4.

[2] White, Making President 1964, p. 30.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 489.

[4] Ibid., pp. 536, 538; Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 24; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 99; White, Making President 1964, p. 28; A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 91.

> drums gather and humble us beyond escape
> propound the single, falling fact:
> time, suspended between memory and present,
> hangs unmeasured, empty.[1]

The drums proclaimed and generated a special time, a plenum-void (*sunyata*), a fullness (*kairos*) and emptiness (*kenosis*) of time, when hell unearthed and the sky hung low in the world's capital (*axis mundi*).

In this archaic atmosphere, Black Jack took on a special symbolic significance in poetic imagination. In a world made transparent to its own negative depths, where tragedy persists even as it is surmounted--where altar is also precipice and fountains an abyss and noon is midnight--Robert Hazel sees a single element of unalloyed *joie de vivre* in "one riderless black horse dancing."[2] Bruce Catton saw the rearing of Black Jack as if he were protesting the loss of his chieftain, and Jack Marshall sees in his tossing and snorting some of Kennedy's own spirit, now gone from this world but ours by default.[3] A. R. Ammons also sees mirrored in the horse's prancing our wish to "break free," to "burst this energy of grief," to "outrun this knowledge," but we are contained--as the horse is contained, as Kennedy himself was contained--by the inescapable fact which the drums reiterate:

> the riderless horse,
> restive with the pressure of held flight,
> tosses the hung bit,
> worries the soldier's tameless arm--
> sidling, prances the energy out

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[1] A. R. Ammons, "Belief," in *Of Poetry and Power*, p. 37; cf. Manchester, *Death*, p. 538.

[2] Robert Hazel, "Riderless Horse," in *Of Poetry and Power*, p. 65.

[3] U.P.I., *Four Days*, p. 99; Jack Marshall, "Elegy for the New Year," in *Of Poetry and Power*, p. 33.

XUM

ahead, unalterable, the fact proceeds,
and the bit holds.

belief, light as a drumrattle,
touches us and lifts us into tears.[1]

Without willing it or knowing it, people had stumbled into an experience of the sacred at a very primitive and basic level during the assassination weekend, especially in the rich symbolism of the funereal ceremonies. As with any experience of the holy, which Rudolph Otto describes as _mysterium tremens et fascinans_,[2] people were both repelled and attracted by it, turning away from their television sets and being drawn back to them during the assassination weekend and, afterwards, seeking both to forget it and to recapture and remember it. Like the _anamnesis_ of Communion--"Do this in remembrance of me"--which is really a re-presentation of the crucifixion-resurrection event, people sought a sacramental means to revive and reconstruct the sacred experience which had engaged them in a benign light. Some made pilgrimages to the Kennedy shrine at Arlington with its eternal flame: 700,000 by a month after his death; paying homage five-abreast in a steady procession on Christmas Day with a waiting line the equivalent of several city blocks; 28,000,000 by June 1971 and still coming at a rate of 10,000 a day at that time.[3] But many wanted means closer to hand. Not only in the United States, but also in the rest of the world--which participated at a somewhat lower intensity in the shock, sorrow, and ceremony of the assassination weekend (#1)--Kennedy was memorialized in the dedication of parks and monuments, in the naming of streets and buildings, and, providing more portable and possessable sacred treasures, in the purchase and collection

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[1] A.R. Ammons, "Belief," in _Of Poetry and Power_, p. 37.

[2] Rudolph Otto, _The Idea of the Holy_; the phrase loses something in translation but means "a terrifying and fascinating mystery."

[3] Grosvenor, "Last Full Measure," p. 355; Manchester, _Death_, p. 625; San Francisco _Chronicle_, June 7, 1971.

XUM

of souvenirs and photographs, of books and records, as well as the annual replay on television of memorial films (#2). These things provided only an echo of the assassination weekend experience. Lorenzo Thomas writes:

> Your funeral lost in air
> Our world so badly fitted for permanence
> Or sorrow, your widow lost in air
> Your name lonely on highways and airports.[1]

Next to the full panoply of funereal ceremonies, Kennedy's name on buildings and streets is a bare reminder, and yet, like a churinga stone, it serves to remind people of the sights and sounds of that extraordinary time.[2]

People sought not only to preserve the sacred experience of the assassination weekend but also to transmute it, muting its more painful aspects in the process. The first thing they came to grips with was not Kennedy's life, which they could re-evaluate at their leisure, but his death. The assassination which had intruded upon them and the assassination weekend which they had not assimilated cried out for a symbolization which would not strip them of all mystery but at least would render them more comprehensible and bearable. White saw the assassination weekend soon converted into a sacred drama that gave "all people a sense of identification" and "translated the majesty of leadership into an intimate simplicity of a Biblical nature," a drama that had in it "all things to bind all men"[3]--"a hero, slain; a villain; a sorrowing wife; a stricken mother and family; and two enchanting children."[4] The first memorial magazine articles and books focused on the assassination weekend itself and especially on Jacqueline Kennedy as the heroine of the hour, a widowed queen (#3). This transformation from real life figures to dramaturgy was matched by a transformation of the assassination itself from raw discord to symbolic meaning. "What was a monstrous personal and historic crime a year ago," writes Reston, "is something even more elemental and enduring; it is a symbol of the tragedy and caprice of life."[1] In the symbolization of the assassination, the assassin tended to be shaded in the familiar imagery of evil forces and figures and recast from incomprehensibly otiose and insane into comprehensibly diabolic and conspiratorial (#4). The diabolization of the assassin, in turn, helped to elevate Kennedy as he was coalesced with archetypal figures and symbols of good.

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[1] Lorenzo Thomas, "Not That Hurried Grief," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 58.

[2] In primitive Australia, churinga stones are ordinary stones made sacred by the inscription of totemic emblems on them; see Durkheim, Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. Kennedy half-dollars are similar (#2).

[3] The root word for "religion," religare, means "to bind."

[4] White, Making President 1964, p. 25.

The Kennedy myth did not, of course, begin with Kennedy's death. He was, as Sorensen put it, "almost legendary" in life, idealized while alive before martyrdom set in and increased the desire to perpetuate him in memory.[2] But with his death, Kennedy was eternalized, a final image was needed, and a collective interpretation, a group myth, took shape in the very process of "making sense" of the assassination and recovering from it.[3] Born of the pain and glory of the assassination weekend in which primeval archetypes surfaced in a time out of time, Kennedy was transformed and transfigured by the dimensions of an eternal pattern. Kennedy, the critic of myth (especially in the narrow sense of outworn political and economic ideology) and the champion of pragmatism, ironically became one with the legendary heroes about whom he had read as a boy, with the lost-cause champions he had celebrated in Profiles in Courage, with the "king who must die" about whom he had read in 1960 in Mary Renault's novel.[1] Though vestigial, that royallegend, portrayed in Fraser's Golden Bough, took hold of the nation in all its atavistic power, and Kennedy became the kind of folk hero without whom no society achieves cohesion; he was clothed in romance and invested with magic, and, in that guise, became a more compelling figure than in "real life."[2] Kennedy was no longer seen as having been freakishly assassinated while seeking to woo votes for re-election in a divided Texas, but he was seen as having given his life for his country. The mystique of the martyr, compounded by an image of youthfulness and vitality and by feelings of guilt over the assassination, made a myth of the mortal man, canonization and idolatry superceding vilification and even affection.[3] Thus Kennedy was mythologized as hero and king, martyr and Christ, Lincoln and light (#5).

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[1] Reston, "What Was Killed Was the Promise," p. 222.

[2] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 853-854; Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 230-231.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 230; Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 113.

I

While foreigners joined Americans in memorializing and mythologizing President Kennedy, their experience of the assassination weekend which served as a prelude to that process had been somewhat different. Overall, the Kennedy assassination hit the United States harder than the rest of the world. While the world had lost one of its important leaders, Americans had lost their own President and a key figure in their civil religion. With few possible exceptions, American felt more earth-shaking shock, grieved more intensely, and felt more need to recover quickly. Nonetheless, the degree of response abroad was unusual and the same pattern of protest, disorganization, and re-organization could be discerned in it. "In these tragic hours," said French Premier Georges Pompidou, "all of France is on the side of the United States in its wrath, sorrow, and also, despite everything, its confidence in the future."[1]

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[1] Reston, "What Was Killed Was the Promise," p. 228; Manchester, Death, pp. 351, 623.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 623-624, 322.

[3] The "Warren Report," p. xvi cited by Knight, "Death of J. K.," p. 18; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 853; Manchester, Death, pp. 562 and 625 (citing James Reston).

Kennedy's death shocked the world. Some leaders reacted vociferously, others in stunned silence. "Everything in one cried out in protest," said British Prime Minister Alec Douglas-Home, over the loss of this "young, gay, and brave statesman, killed in the full vigour of his manhood, when he bore on his shoulders all the cares and hopes of the world."[2] The British House of Commons was adjourned. In the Soviet Union, Chairman Nikita Khrushchev sat dazed in the American embassy, and Russian radio interrupted its regular programming to play only Slavic dirges.[3] Austrian radio was silenced for five minutes and then dropped entertainment programs.[4] Except for China, which gleefully depicted Kennedy biting the dust in its official newspaper, nations at odd with the United States suspended their opposition. The junta in the Dominican Republic, which Kennedy had refused to recognize, proclaimed nine days of official mourning while, in Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk ordered a three-day moratorium on attacks on the United States and the beginning of court mourning.[5] Even Castro mourned the loss of an "accustomed enemy," calling his death bad news, and the Cuban ambassador to the United Nations expressed profound displeasure at Kennedy's death despite the existing antagonisms between their governments.[1] "On that sad November morning in 1963 the international front was about as peaceful as it ever gets in these turbulent times," wrote Lyndon Johnson. "The world, it seemed, had ceased its turmoil for a moment--caught in the shock of John Kennedy's death."[2]

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 134. [2] Ibid., p. 47.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 368, 448-449.

[4] Alex J. Goldman, John Fitzgerald Kennedy: The World Remembers (New York: Fleet Press Corporation, 1968), p. 24.

[5] Manchester, Death, p. 449; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938; A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 49. Sihanouk had anti-American posters taken down.

In the United States, flags were lowered to half mast and government social functions dropped for thirty days of official mourning. The ninety-odd nations represented at Kennedy's funeral followed suit by dipping their flags to half-mast during the ceremony. From 12:14-12:19 P.M. on Monday, the telephone and cable communication between the United States and the rest of the world was suspended, the Panama Canal was closed, and, in Athens, Greece, cars were stopped at the height of its rush hour.[3] In shock and in tribute, the world's usual business was suspended, time was set aside to miss and honor Kennedy, and even the totem-flags of nations, symbols of their glory, were abased in sad homage to a fallen world leader whose appeal transcended the national loyalties which the flags represented.

As might be expected, messages of condolence were received from such notables as Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, Nassar, Tito, and Khrushchev (who confessed "deep personal grief"), and condolence books in American embassies were signed by world leaders (e.g., Khrushchev and Adenauer). But the popular response abroad astonished world leaders and American diplomats.[4] In Great Britain, Prime Minister Douglas-Home found the "convulsion" in his nation over Kennedy's death unique in the experience of his government. He was "amazed at the depth of Bristish response, especially among our youth," as he found London teen-agers "just distraught, openly crying in the streets."[1] Over a thousand people walked miles in the rain to stand before the United States embassy Friday night, and "endless thousands" streamed by to sign the condolence book there in the ensuing days.[2] Said David Bruce, "Great Britain has never before mourned a foreigner as it has President Kennedy."[3] It was the same in France, "Never, perhaps, has the death of a foreign chief of state so profoundly moved every Frenchman," said the President of the City Council of Paris.[4] "I am stunned," said Charles de Gaulle. "They are crying all over France. It is though he were a Frenchman, a member of their own family."[5]

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[1] U.P.I. Four Days, p. 138; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938.

[2] Lyndon Baines Johnson, The Vantage Point: Perspectives on the Presidency, 1963-69 (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), p. 22.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 625, 584-585.

[4] Ibid., p. 498; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 46.

Moving beyond the general response abroad, Kennedy's loss was also felt specifically as the loss of a world leader, of a father, and of the West's representative. Khrushchev saw Kennedy's death as a "hard blow to the cause of peace" and to U.S.-U.S.S.R. co-operation. A Briton wrote in a condolence book, "I miss him like my father," and, in Berlin, twenty-three-year-old Horst Tammerman said: "We feel like our father has been taken from us. We feel the same grief. We feel left alone."[6] The Observer saw Kennedy as the fallen herald of new hopes for the West.[7] Pablo Casals reflected that there had never been a tragedy in his life that had brought so much sadness and grief to as many people as Kennedy's death. Sean O'Casey wrote:

> What a terrible thing has happened to us all! To you there (in America), to us here, to all everywhere. Peace who was becoming bright-eyed now sits in the shadow of death: her handsome champion has been killed as he walked by her very side. Her gallant boy is dead.
> What a cruel, foul, and most unnatural murder.
> We mourn here with you poor sad American people.[8]

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 557, 498.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938.

[3] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 43.

[4] Goldman, World Remembers, p. 49.

[5] Manchester, Death, p. 498.

[6] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 49.

[7] U.P.I, Four Days, pp. 135, 133.

[8] Ibid., p. 46.

In the Third World, grief was rampant also. Latin America was "devastated," according Kennedy "unparalleled veneration."[1] "Crowds wept, dirges and requiems filled the airways," wrote Goldman, "equalling and in many instances often exceeding the grief which overcame the people of the United States."[1] In New Dehli, people cried in the streets. In Nairobi, warriors held a tribal feast of mourning for Kennedy at night, mourning the passing of a great chief (though they had not heard of him before).[2] One African walked ten miles through the bush to tell an American consul, "I have lost a friend and I am so sorry." Rusk and Harriman saw Kennedy casting the same kind of image abroad that Franklin Roosevelt had, in life and in death, and developing the same kind of rapport through the reading of his speeches by ordinary people. The eight-year-old daughter of K. O. Mbadiwe, Nigeria's Minister of State, brought her father to tears by reciting to him from memory Kennedy's entire Inaugural Address, an index of how far Kennedy's words had penetrated in a diverse and shrinking globe.[3]

As in America, Kennedy's death brought with it its share of idealization, identification, and rededication in world reactions. At the official level, statements and eulogies were delivered by Lester Pearson, Harold MacMillan, Winston Churchill, Pope Paul VI, etc. as well as by Presidents Hoover and Eisenhower and Governor Rockefeller in the U.S.[4] Some praised Kennedy as a leader. "That Was The Week That Was" commentators hailed Kennedy as a prince among politicians, who had restored that vocation to respectability.[5] MacMillan praised Kennedy's knowledge, freshness, flexibility and courage. Along with other Soviet leaders, academicians, poets, and artists, Chairman Khrushchev praised Kennedy's broad outlook and realistic search for a negotiated solution to world problems in a telegram reprinted in Izvestia.[1] De Gaulle hailed Kennedy as a soldier who died in the line of duty and hailed him as a great example. To bring Kennedy's exemplary qualities home, Stopsley Secondary Modern School in Luton, England, devoted a day to Kennedy, and Tito had schools throughout Yugoslavia devote an hour to discussing him.[2] Wrote British schoolboy Norman Gerald Shaw, aged eleven, to Mrs. Kennedy: "I thought he was a peace-loving, brave and kind man. In fact, all a man should be. One day I hope that I will follow his example."[3] Another Englishman went a step further in identification. He wrote in the American embassy memory book:

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[1] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938; Goldman, World Remembers, p. 43.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 598; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 49; A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 49.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 498, 366, 368.

[4] Ibid., p. 368; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 134.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938.

> With the death of President Kennedy, every man in the Free World is a Kennedy. His memory would surely inspire hundreds of young men all over the world to take the message. Long live the memory of John Kennedy, the preacher of humanity.[4]

Westminster Abbey's Archdeacon Edward Carpenter also saw Kennedy as a source of inspiration. He saw Kennedy as "having inspired the imagination of men in a way that will not soon be forgotten" in his reaching out to blacks, the hungry, and refugees.[5] In dedication, a writer in the British memory book prayed that "all the good work he did be carried on," while Winston Churchill declaimed, "Those who come after Mr. Kennedy must strive the more to achieve the ideals of world peace and human happiness and dignity to which his Presidency was dedicated."[6]

The unusual degree of response to the Kennedy assassination abroad is, in part, indicative of Kennedy's archaic appeal, especially in Western Europe and especially to youth there. Kennedy's "last campaign" in Europe had been a success, and he was mourned by his "global constituents," as Fairlie calls them. "Many people of other lands consider Kennedy their President," we are told.[1] But, of course, he was not. Each nation has its own leaders and capitals and historic institutions and heroes precluding the kind of archaic monopoly on inspiration through sacred kingship that Kennedy, to some degree, achieved in the United States. While Kennedy's predominantly archaic Inaugural Address was remembered and used in memorials abroad, it did not define reality there and was not the only set of words, even of Kennedy's, used to clothe the less major calamity of his death; the West Germans, for instance, had the good sense to inscribe, neither that address nor the "Ich Bin Ein Berliner" speech that had stirred them to a fever pitch in touting archaic "freedom," but the more historic peace-seeking words of Kennedy's American University commencement address on their commemorative plaque in Berlin.[2] On a modern level, nothing was was changed as the chances for peace were neither dashed by Kennedy's loss nor enhanced by the world's temporary unity in grief and homage. Yet it is of some historic significance that most of the nations of an interdependent world could join together at a human level more basic than politics, suspending their flags and nationalisms and antagonisms before a common human tragedy and paying tribute to a man they chose to remember in historic terms--largely on the basis of the test ban treaty Kennedy helped to write as the final chapter of his life--as a peace-maker and a preacher of humanity.

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, pp. 133, 135; Goldman, World Remembers, p. 93.

[2] Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 49, 52; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938.

[3] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 134.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 135.

[6] Ibid., p. 134.

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[1] U.P.I, Four Days, p. 48.

[2] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 49. For the much greater foreign than American response to the American University speech, see Chapter VI, #5. The British inscribed words from the Inaugural Address in stone at Runnymede.

II

Although people abroad also went through the three earlier phases of reaction to the Kennedy assassination to some extent, it was chiefly in memorialization that they joined, and in some cases outdid, the Americans. Memorialization abroad began, as in the United States, with insubstantial flowers and flames and sounds, flowers that fade and flames that burn out and the sound of cannon and organ and bells that pass into wind. It is, perhaps, symptomatic of the less intense foreign reaction that church bells rang out less in distress than in tribute. Although in Berlin the Freedom Bell, given by the people of the United States, tolled the night of the assassination, it was not until the following morning that Westminster Abbey's tenor bell tolled and then once a minute in a tribute reserved for monarchs; in Poland, church bells tolled the night following the funeral.[1] Flowers, symbols of life in all its transitoriness, were assembled not only in floral tributes around Kennedy's bier and grave and assassination site, but also in a huge black wreath which Rome's taxi drivers propped against a cab before the United States embassy and in wreaths that ships at sea threw overboard at the time of Kennedy's funeral. Perhaps more poignant than masses of flowers was the single red rose which Senator Margaret Chase Smith placed on Kennedy's former Senate desk or the single flower placed by a little girl on the White House lawn.[2] Flames burned brightly against the night in the torchlight parades mounted in honor of Kennedy in Berlin, drawing a crowd of 60,000 people, and in Berne, Switzerland on the night of the assassination, and candlelight processions were held a month or two later in Washington, D.C., and in New York City.[3]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 449; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938.

[2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 43; Manchester, Death, pp. 497, 567, 585, 241.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 368, 626; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 940; U.P.I., Four Days, pp. 43, 50. For light symbolism, see #5, below.

Twenty-one-gun salutes rent the air at 7,000 United States military posts around the world at the time of Kennedy's funeral at St. Matthew's, which was carried to much of the world by television as well as involving much of the world's royalty and political leadership directly through attendance.[1] Requiem mass was also held at Westminster Abbey--attended by the British Prime Minister and including the singing of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic"--and in many other churches--including St. Peter's in Rome, Pope Paul VI presiding--only to be repeated on the anniversary of Kennedy's death in Westminster Abbey, in Vienna's Franzikaner Church, and in Dublin's St. Andrew's Church (which Irish President de Valera attended).[2] In Columbia, so many citizens paid for the recital of masses for the repose of Kennedy's soul that it took several years to complete them.[3] Beyond the Christian fold, Kennedy was remembered in Buddhist prayers before his picture draped in black in Tokyo, by Buddhist bonzes in Southeast Asia, in Moslem prayers.[4] True to their own customs, natives in the back country of Guinea gave their pastor money to buy a rush mat in which to bury President Kennedy.[5] The words and the symbols were different, but they expressed a universal language of grief and tribute.

Yet more permanent and substantial memorials were sought. Parks and monuments were established around the world to honor Kennedy's memory. Most impressive among the monuments were a Burning Bush Menorah in Israel and a massive abstract sculpture resembling an upside-down cross in Argentina; grandest of the parks were "an acre of English ground" overlooking

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 584; see Chapter VII, introduction and #3D.

[2] Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 52, 24, 69. [3] Ibid., p. 43.

[4] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 48; for a graphic portrayal, see United States Information Agency, "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums."

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 939.

Runnymede (where the Magna Carta was signed) given to the United States by the British people, a 400-acre President Kennedy Memorial Park overlooking Kennedy's ancestral home in Ireland, and the John F. Kennedy Peace Forest dominated by a temple-like Memorial Building overlooking Jerusalem.[1] But grandest of all was John Kennedy's grave at Arlington, soon joined by that of his "rightful but deprived heir," Robert Kennedy. At least one skeptical Englishman is at a loss to explain the anomalous existence of these graves in the modern world. Fairlie writes:

> Only an American can explain these two graves in the National Cemetery at Arlington, bitten into its hillside, their pomp and their circumstance; not Winston Church, not Charles de Gaulle, has such a resting place, or is even buried in his nation's capital, yet each was the saviour of his country; not George Washington, not Abraham Lincoln, not Franklin Roosevelt. . . . The graves are there, immense in their sweep, ample in their design, commanding in their situation, like the tombs which in a vanished age were erected only for the proudest dynasts. . . . Only an American can explain why, in the twentieth century, they are there: pavilions of splendour among the ranks of equal headstones which mark the deaths of equal men. . . . To an outsider, it seems as if the American people, for the first time in their history, have buried an emperor.[2]

Indeed, so. As we have noted, much of Kennedy's appeal, in life and even more in death, was archaic, and just as mankind showed devotion to sacred kings in pyramids and to a majestic God in cathedrals, so these monuments to Kennedy enshrined his memory in an archaically meaningful way.

Yet people also sought less grandiose means closer to home by which to remember Kennedy. Naming or renaming streets and buildings was the easiest and most common form of non-portable memorial. Sometimes, clergy were involved in their "dedication" and one building built in Kennedy's memory was a church,[3] but even without clergy, the "dedication" of streets and buildings as well as parks and monuments was a kind of religious ceremonial, often involving heads of state or members of the Kennedy clan.[1] In the "everywhen" of remembrance (anamnesis), Kennedy's words or noble values or Kennedy's visit or a great sacred event, such as the signing of the Magna Carta, would be brought to mind again with added significance during the dedication ceremony, and, thereafter, the Kennedy name or inscription would bring to mind both the dedication ceremony and Kennedy's death and life and would help to define space, which, since primitive times, has always been a religious function.[2] Streets and bridges were named for Kennedy not only in Arkansas and Ohio but also in Greece and in France, in Munich and in Vienna, and even in the village of Syvsten in Denmark (population 100). But it was in the capital cities around the world, each the axis mundi of its nation's civil religion, that street-naming took on special significance. Amid the monumental architecture of Paris, Kennedy had the honor of joining an elite circle of American Presidents--Washington, Lincoln, Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt--on street signs. In Berlin, the square outside Schoeneberg city hall (to which the torch parade had wound) was renamed John F. Kennedy Platz in commemoration of Kennedy's June 1963 visit there.[3] Buildings named for Kennedy ranged from a spastic children's center in Hong Kong to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and, among educational institutions, from a college library in Kenya to the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library to be located at Harvard; Kennedy's reputed devotion to the intellectual and cultural life also led to the less physical but related establishment of lectureships, scholarships, chairs, and institutes around the world, including the John Fitzgerald Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.[1] Moving into broader spaces, a majestic peak in the Canadian Yukon was named Mount Kennedy; Idlewild Airport in New York City was renamed John F. Kennedy International Airport; and, at Mrs. Kennedy's request to President Johnson, Florida's Cape Canaveral, where space rockets were launched, was renamed Cape Kennedy.[2] Carrying forward Kennedy's identification with space travel and with ethereal aspirations which it symbolized, the space center in Houston was also named for Kennedy, and rockets appear on several commemorative stamps from around the world.[3]

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[1] Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 56, 68, 76-77.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 2-3.

[3] Cardinal Koenig blessed the John F. Kennedy Hof apartment complex in Vienna; earth from Kennedy's grave and from St. Patrick's hill in Ireland were mixed in an urn in the cornerstone of a new church in Parma, Italy, which was dedicated to St. Patrick; Goldman, World Remembers, p. 79.

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[1] For Jacqueline's role, see #3, below; for Robert's, Chapter IX, #6.

[2] By naming, man superimposes his own symbol systems on external reality and organizes it for his use. For this process in primitive Australian religion and universally, see Durkheim, Elementary Forms. For man's naming the animals in Biblical myth, see Genesis 2. For the similar religious definition of time, see Chapter V, introduction, above.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 627, 498; Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 62, 66, 33, 49, 96-97.

Yet, again, people wanted something less ethereal, something they could put their hands on, indeed, something more like a postage stamp in size and portability. It was not enough that Kennedy's name should appear in profusion on streets and buildings, his visage in quiet parks and sublime edifices. People wanted something more like an amulet or churinga stone in which Kennedy's totemic presence could be available for their own. Like relics, fragments of the platform from which Kennedy had delivered his last speech in San Antonio on November 21 became collector's items, and Dr. Burkley, the President's personal physician, received one of the flowers that Jacqueline Kennedy had been carrying at the time of the assassination as "the greatest treasure of my life."[4] But for most, coins, stamps, and pictures filled the bill. The United States Treasury began minting fifty million Kennedy half-dollars--and could not keep them in circulation because they were being hoarded as souvenirs.[1] More for collecting than for postage, hundreds of commemorative stamps were issued by over sixty countries, topping Franklin Roosevelt's thirty-four, along with commemorative medallions, often reminding people of Kennedy's words or portraying him as a source of light or as a Lincolnesque liberator.[2] Sales of memorial pictures of Kennedy were enormous.[3] With the post-mortem identification of Kennedy with the civil rights movement, pictures of Kennedy joined pictures of Jesus on the walls of many Negro homes (often joined there by Martin Luther King and by Robert Kennedy before the decade was out). In Latin America, Kennedy's picture was torn from newspapers and hung on the walls of workers' shacks and in the hovels of the campesinos,[4] and, a traveler told me, Kennedy's picture also appeared among the gods on the walls of India.

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[1] For details, see Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 24, 30, 41, 43, 46, 60, 74, 78, 83, 84, 138.

[2] Ibid., p. 36; Manchester, Death, p. 627. Johnson claims: "I did everything I could to enhance the memory of John Kennedy;" Vantage Point, p. 19; see Chapter IX, #4. Although public reaction at the time of its dedication was "deep gratification," Cape Kennedy was re-named Cape Canaveral in the Seventies.

[3] Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 108-120.

[4] Manchester, Death, pp. 626, 427, 111.

Memorialization was also expressed in poetry and song, which afforded more opportunity for personal interpretation and mythologization than monuments and mementos. In addition to the work of professional poets and balladeers, including Phil Ochs and Yugoslavia's Ramo Ramovich, at least 50,000 adults and children wrote unpublished poems.[5]

Finally, the earliest and most complete form of memorialization were memorial issues of magazines--including a four-page supplement to USSR: Soviet Life Today with Kennedy's picture on the cover captioned "In Memoriam"--and the pictorial histories, dealing either with the assassination weekend or with Kennedy's life. These media--combining the portability and possessability of relics and mementos, the majestic pictures of John and

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 627. [2] See #5, below.

[3] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 8.

[4] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 938. [5] Manchester, Death, p. 556.

Jacqueline Kennedy in various moods, and words both from Kennedy himself and from others interpreting his significance--did much to preserve and generate the Kennedy myth. The sale of memorial books immediately after the assassination was enormous. Later, they were supplemented by prose variants of the same, such as Manchester's exhaustively detailed Death of a President and the Sorensen and Schlesinger biographies of Kennedy, each of which was serialized in magazines before publication. Over a million copies of the Warren Report, giving the official explanation of the causes and agency of the assassination, were sold a year later.[1] Within two years, ninety books had been written about Kennedy, feeding the Kennedy legend, which, Fuchs tells us, grew after his death because Kennedy fit the requirements that Americans have always set for presidential heroes.[2] Articles and books about Kennedy continue to be published even ten years later, when there seemed to be a special revival of memorialization, bearing testimony to the continuing power of the Kennedy myth.

Although less complete than books, perhaps the most telling media of memorialization were records and films, which brought Kennedy to the people in his own "living accents." The showing of a Kennedy memorial film was the most moving event at the otherwise predictable 1964 Democratic National Convention.[3] The United States Information Agency film "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," which intersperses scenes from Kennedy's presidency and scenes from the assassination weekend in a way that accentuates both,[4] is shown annually on television around the anniversary of Kennedy's death. Through a miracle of electronics undreamt of by aborigines seeking the return of their ancestral heroes but to much the same effect, Kennedy was brought back and re-presented--in this apex of the memorialization process--just as he was and exactly in the same televised guise in which the American people had come to know and love him, being made available not as a constant reminder but all the more tellingly for periodic remembrance when the sacred time recurred.

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[1] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 8.

[2] Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 192.

[3] See Chapter IX, #5.

[4] The film ennobles Kennedy's life by juxtaposing it with his sacred death. Most memorial books, however, deal with only one kind of scene or the other. Even the 1968 A.P. book, Triumph and Tragedy, moves directly from John's death to Bobby's succession without covering the funereal ceremonies.

The whole process of memorialization, including the commercial aspect and the retouching of Kennedy that accompanied the real grief for him, is sympathetically but critically summarized in Oscar Mandel's poem "We Who Do Not Grieve in Silence:"

1

First came the special issues of the magazines
With loyal photographs: the rich old times, the rocking chair,
The wife who knew who Dali is, the muscular war,
The politics retouched and smiling, the happy hammer
Of his power, the idiocy of death. Fifty cents.

The president was dead, tears fell and incomes rose.
Wait, brothers, wait,
My grief has gone to market too.

2

The picture books cost more but they were meant to last,
They used the most caressing words, like strong ideals
And dedicated heart and faith in our democracy.
And those who sold the plaster statuettes (one dollar each).
Their right hand mourned, their left rang up the cash.

The president was dead, laments and incomes rose.
Wait, brothers, wait,
My grief has gone to market too.

3

Congressmen deplored into cameras, the voters saw
Their simple, manly sorrow. Foreign crowns were caught
Bowing usefully toward the poor man's grave.
All were shocked; what's more they really were; alas
One could not keep one's honest sobs untelevised.

The president was dead, tears fell and reputations rose;

Wait, brothers, wait,
My grief has gone to market too.

4

Next came the records, and his voice was heard again
To make flesh creep from shore to shore. A publisher
Withdrew a luckless exposé;[1] a sensitive biography
Recouped the loss. Three journalists retold the terror
Irreversible. We shuddered, covered up our eyes, and bought.

The president was dead, laments and incomes rose.
Wait, brothers, wait,
My grief has gone to market too.

5

When great men breathe their last, their expiration
Swells our sails. Films shall be turned, sermons released,
Memoirs composed and statues erected. Pure grief is silent, yes,
And yet pure hardness is too hard for us as well. We are
Our comedy: the standards we betray, we made.

The president is dead; my poem goes to press;
Grief, brothers, grief,
Is my profit, but all the same I grieve.[2]

Memorialization falsified Kennedy both by commercializing and by immortalizing him. While genuine "virtuoso" religion has always insisted on worship being in spirit and in truth, responsive popular religion always sells doves in the temple courtyard and yearns for yarns heroic. According to Weber, the popularization of Christianity, for instance, brought an inevitable "routinization of charisma," which gave it a regular economic base and rounded off its initially high standards. Much of paganism seems merely to have been baptized by the church in periods of rapid expansion--as in taking over temples to Graeco-Roman gods renamed for corresponding saints--and superstition remains rampant in peasant cultures.[3] Yet Christianity

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[1] Victor Lasky's JFK: The Man and the Myth was withdrawn from sale; he also cancelled a dozen lectures and three television appearances, saying "Kennedy is no longer subject to criticism on my part;" A.P., Torch, p. 54.

[2] Oscar Mandel, "We Who Do Not Grieve in Silence," in Of Poetry and Power, pp. 103-104.

[3] For Christianity as a gloss over paganism, see Frazer, Golden Bough.

XUM

has behind it the Hebrew Second-Commandment prohibition of images and within it the "Protestant principle," which overreacts against saints and relics, which partially de-mythologizes the re-presentation of Christ in Communion,[1] which keeps in mind a transcendent which no earthen vessel can fully contain, and which in its historic civil religion remains skeptical of all claims to charisma;[2] even on its Catholic side, which is always on the verge of reversion to archaism in its popular manifestations, Christianity has theologians to clarify it and monks to exemplify it and occasional prophetic voices to call it back to purity. But national civil religion has none of these. The most it has is a new high priest in the succeeding President, but, in this case, far from being lord of the memorialization process able to criticize and shape it, Lyndon Johnson found himself, both by choice and by forces outside his control, subject to it. It was his wish and strategy not to challenge the archaism of the Kennedy myth but to accept and use it when he could, wrapping himself in Kennedy's mantle, and neutralizing or circumventing it when it worked against him politically.[3] Jacqueline Kennedy, who wielded a kind of "temporary regency" over men's hearts, did nothing to restrain the memorialization process but rather encouraged it in a maudlin direction that might have displeased her husband, always less romantic than she.[4] So the pilgrims visited the grave of the sacred king in the axis mundi, bought the uncritical memorial books, and squirreled away Kennedy half-dollars as "souvenirs" but more than souvenirs. Although engraving a face on a coin no longer officially speaks divinity, as it did in Roman days, and the historic God of the motto "In God We Trust" is not to be confused with the face engraved with it on a coin, the coinage of the realm is, nonetheless, a locus for religious mottoes and symbols and only the most venerable figures are emblazoned there (e.g., Lincoln, Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt); Nicholas Knight makes the Roman analogy explicit, placing Jesus' saying about the idolatry of using coins with Caesar's head on them (Matthew 22:19-21) right after Manchester's report of the hoarding of Kennedy half-dollars, suggesting a popular use of the coins as tokens of divinity.[1] Against the archaism of memorialization, modernism could only show disdain. Some Wesleyan students, for instance, tended to deride the sentimental tributes to Kennedy, such as the naming of buildings, with a humour not unlike Kennedy's own.[2] But neither disdain nor derision could speak to the need which gave birth to memorialization, and a more historic approach which could both partially accept and refine the popular memorialization process, threshing the wheat from the chaff, was, again, largely lacking. Not until Robert Kennedy, who had coasted on the romantic hopes that the memorialization process helped to keep alive, turned against his brother's position on Vietnam was the Kennedy legacy refined in a more historic direction.[3]

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[1] John Calvin, for instance, eschewed magic transformation of bread and wine but held that the believer partook of the body of Christ in heaven.

[2] See Introduction, #2, and Chapter III, introduction, above.

[3] See Chapter IX, #3-6.

[4] See #3, below, and Chapter IV, above.

III

The memorial books and commentators made a good deal of Jacqueline Kennedy. They made a fetish out of identifying "most indelible scenes" from the assassination weekend, and, while the catalogue varied a little, three scenes involving Mrs. Kennedy and her children were almost universally included in prose and pictures. The nation was "brought to its knees" when

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[1] Knight, "Death of J. K.," p. 15.

[2] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 213, 205.

[3] See Chapter IX, #6.

Jacqueline Kennedy knelt in the Capitol rotunda to kiss the flag on her husband's coffin with Caroline also kneeling to touch it and reaching under the flag to touch the coffin as well; nothing "etched itself more sharply."[1] When John Jr. saluted his father's flag-draped casket following the funeral, the image was so forceful that spectators across the street "crumpled."[2] The folding of the flag that had covered Kennedy's casket and its presentation to Mrs. Kennedy provided a final "most moving" image.[3] Common to these three episodes, President and flag, as the chief symbols in American civil religion, were wedded in memorable salutation, devotion, and reverence, and the Kennedy family--with Jacqueline bearing her own grief "like a brave flag"[4]--both evoked and expressed the nation's grief and devotion.

The assassination weekend was Jacqueline Kennedy's time to shine as exemplary mourner, shrouded queen, purged priestess, and main memorializer. Mrs. Kennedy's "classic grief-torn profile" was the center of attention in the photograph of Lyndon Johnson's inauguration,[5] and she was the star of the assassination weekend memorial books and even more in Manchester's treatment. Manchester highlights the nobility of Jacqueline's concern for secret service men and secretaries, her sympathy for Johnson, her composure in greeting friends personally after the White House mass, her self-control.[6] U.P.I. correspondent Joseph L. Myler also was impressed by Jacqueline's maintenance of the "classic mask of tragedy" without flinching, describing her public deportment in minute detail in a story entitled "Her Tears Never

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 542, 511; White, Making President 1964, p. 27; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 83; Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 136; Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 24.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 590; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 99; Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 136.

[3] U.P.I., Four Days, pp. 99, 124.

[4] Grosvenor, "Last Full Measure," p. 346. See Chapter II, #2.

[5] For Jacqueline's upstaging Johnson, see Chapter IX, #3.

[6] Manchester, Death, pp. 350, 407, 538, 464, 533, 171.

Fell."[1] Although some Wesleyan students doubted the genuineness of Mrs. Kennedy's feelings and felt she had been "acting impeccably far too long," they seemed easily enough reassured that she was fairly red-eyed most of the time and were grateful that she was composed enough to spare them having to witness her breaking down and sobbing--the whole discussion indicating a degree of obsession, perhaps with Oedipal overtones.[2] "How brave Jackie had been," said a Minneapolis respondent, and Mindak concluded that "the inspirational courage with which Mrs. Kennedy was seen to endure her grief elevated her stature in the eyes of many respondents."[3] Praising her nobility of spirit, Cardinal Cushing recalled how her "frail beauty matched in courage with the stalwart warrior who was her husband."[4] Theodore White considered the grace of her leadership in the proceedings of the assassination weekend to be the noblest of all tributes to her husband's spirit.[5] President Johnson remarked, "At a time when we showed the world our seamy, ugly side, she revealed and symbolized our nobler side."[6] And Poet Archibald MacLeish saw Jacqueline in an inspirational role, making the "darkest days the American people have known in a hundred years the deepest revelation of their inner strength."[7] Manchester saw Mrs. Kennedy's "gallant devotion" expressed through funereal ceremonies restoring the county's sense of majesty and pride and leaving an "everlasting impression," which made her "unforgettable, a national institution."[8] Martyrdom had transformed the country's concept of Kennedy, elevating Jacqueline, according to Manchester, to a "kind of temporary regency."[1] "Jacqueline walked as regal as any emperor, queen, or prince who followed her," wrote Melville Bell Grosvenor. "She has given the American people from this day on," cabled Lady Jean Campbell to the London Evening Standard, "the one thing they always lacked--majesty."[2] To the English especially, the Kennedys seem to have become "the apotheosis of their own moribund aristocracy, regency figures miraculously reborn," says Manchester, and, at Runnymede, the common people of Britain referred to Mrs. Kennedy as "her American majesty."[3]

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 84.

[2] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 210, and "College Students' Reactions," p. 235.

[3] Mindak, "Television's Functions," p. 137.

[4] Richard Cardinal Cushing, "Eulogy," p. 6.

[5] White, Making President 1964, p. 26. [6] Manchester, Death, p. 414.

[7] Ibid., p. 644. [8] Ibid., pp. 242, 482, 644.

Jacqueline Kennedy was not only a royal queen in mythic imagination but also a heavenly queen, akin to Mary, Queen of Heaven: "Stabat mater dolorosa . . ." She was the representative of the whole people in their grief, the transfigured widow, a mystic symbol, "real in image, yet more than real."[4] With Kennedy having gone on (to the gods) and Jacqueline left behind, she was, for the moment, the mediatrix between heaven and earth, who, like Mary, keeps contact with the heavenly without losing her full humanity (as Christ and Kennedy are in danger of doing), so that people could feel unusually close to her and identify with her, expressing their own grief through sympathy for her who expresses that grief in purest form, a symbol of the national catharsis.[5] Jacqueline was seen as the chief celebrant at Kennedy's altar, finding new life there; writes Robert Hazel:

Let her take his blood
        on her tongue,
his being wine
        at her green altar,
the sacrament of summer
        in her veins.[6]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 351. [2] Ibid., p. 580. [3] Ibid., pp. 446-447, 644.

[4] Ibid., pp. 530, 294, 490; White, Making President 1964, p. 28.

[5] Manchester, Death, pp. 580, 294; Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 23.

[6] Robert Hazel, "Widow," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 65.

Likewise, Will Inman sees Jacqueline as the priestess who delivers sacramentally the living flesh of Kennedy's meanings:

> And when she strides
> soul uplifted
> with unbrazen eyes,
> his coffin cannot contain him,
> her footsteps deliver him
> in rhythms of dignity
> down the avenues of our pulsedrums
> that, mourning, we receive,
> and, accepting his death, we
> take unto us the living
> flesh of his meanings.[1]

As priestess, Jacqueline is a vestal virgin, her carnality purged away--virgin no more than Mary because she has not had children, but because she can have no more, standing under the widow's taboo. "She won't be able to marry again," said a college student; "it would just be impossible." Said another, "You know, she is still very young and attractive, and she's finished really, as a woman. I really feel as though she's had it." Yet she had been seen as a movie queen, gracious, intelligent, cultivated, attractive, "what the college guy would like to marry."[2] It was this continuing attractiveness beneath the veil of this sexpot decked in widow's weeds that made so poignant the taboo that dedicated her to perpetual mourning (Bess Truman would not have needed such a taboo). As Cushing's remark about the frail beauty and the stalwart warrior indicates, the chastened maiden is the other half of the tale of the slain young hero; out of reverence for him who was killed, she must never belong to another.

The widow of the sacred king used to be buried alive in some cultures, and so she still is in ours, her liveliness buried while she is still alive. The contrast was especially sharp because Jacqueline had been so lively before grief transfigured her. She who was Camelot's queen was now its chief mourner, and Camelot's castle, the White House she had restored and enlivened was now a place of melancholy, haunting the nation's vision, a "sad ghost against the night sky."[1] A sense of ineffable tragedy was etched on the nation's conscience, according to Manchester, when they saw the forlorn First Family standing on the White House porch waiting to join Kennedy's coffin in the funeral procession.[2] G.S. Fraser sees in Jacqueline standing there an avatar of Persephone, who had loved the sun but now is consigned to Hades, immobile and statuesque:

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[1] Will Inman, "Jacqueline," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 39; see Chapter VII, #3C (for this poem as an expression of identification with Kennedy).

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 228; Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 210. For this as Oedipal ambivalence, see Chapter VII, #2C.

> And pale, dark-veiled Persephone
> A golden child in either hand,
> Stands by white pillars;
> Silently,
> It seems she might forever stand.[3]

In "Panave for the White Queen," Carol Bergé portrays Jacqueline's immolation even more vividly, suggesting her being blanched of life by the public and reduced to skin and stone reflecting only the light from her dead husband (not unlike her role in the San Francisco Wax Museum where she points to Kennedy's head superimposed through projected light upon the White House):[4]

> How to move, to sleep, now that
> your warm skull has become stone!
> God! that your feet are gone!
> and mine, marking out the hours,
> perform a mockery of minuets
> amid the velvet and the marble.
>
> It was this castle we once lit,
> our lives parallel to love, to
> deep sleep, gentle confidences.

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[1] Doucherty in That Day With God, p. 199; White, Making President 1964, p. 23. See Chapter IV, #1.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 529.

[3] G. S. Frase, "Instead of an Elegy," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 31.

[4] Pointing to Christ is also the role of John the Baptist in the Grünewald painting which is a favorite of Karl Barth's.

> With the same cry as that child
> who bears your eyes, I am turned
> toward the watchers, in their
> terrible distance of armchairs,
> of pages: my cheeks and ribs
> blanched, immolated beneath a
> careful avalanche of pale powder
> and papers: and am remembering
> our hands, our feet, as it was
> when we moved unaware in rooms
> of careless laughter, banquets,
> beds warm into a sleep of love
> where you have gone without me.
> The sounds, the rooms fragment
> and drift, it is too quiet, the
> love having stopped with you,
> the castle flakes like paint,
> I become my own skin and turn
> before their eyes into marble
> lit from within by your face,
> voice stilled by one red note.[1]

For a time, Jacqueline's only passion seemed to be to memorialize her dead husband. No longer a socialite, she was transformed by her vow that the full impact of the loss should be indelibly etched on the national conscience.[2] Jacqueline had taken the wedding ring from her finger and put it on her dead husband's hand, an Irish custom symbolizing "together in life, together in death" and, as Mike Mansfield celebrated it in his eulogy, especially marking the transition from one to the other.[3] In addition, befor the lid was finally closed, she had filled Jack's coffin with memorabilia--letters from herself, Caroline, and John, Jr., a scrimshaw bearing the Presidential seal, gold cuff links she had given him, to which Robert added a P.T. 109 tie pin and the engraved silver rosary that Ethel had given him at their wedding.[4] But these were not enough, sealed in the coffin sunk in the soil. Jacqueline sought more visible reminders. While Kennedy's furniture was being carted out of the White House to make way for the next occupant,[1] Jacqueline felt determined to leave some tokens of the Kennedys having been there: she donated a Monet painting in Kennedy's name and had inscribed beneath the Lincoln inscription, "In this room lived John Fitzgerald Kennedy with his wife Jacqueline during the two years, ten months, and two days he was President of the United States."[2] And she traveled about the world with the other Kennedys dedicating memorials to Kennedy from Cambodia to Runnymede to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, writing letters also to those who made memorial gifts.[3] She planted shamrocks on Kennedy's grave on St. Patrick's Day and took children to mass at St. Matthew's replete with the Navy Hymn on Kennedy's birthday. But eventually, her role as memorializing tabooed widow gave way again to her image as movie queen, kept in public view by the movie magazines, a socialite once more perhaps even a frustrated actress.[4] She married a super-rich Greek shipping magnate, Aristotle Onassis, and was portrayed in some newspapers as a bitchy queen who had her underwear ironed and fired servants willfully, anything about her being news. The moment of grace was over.[5] Her superhuman role impeccably played was gone, and she was her old self again. Nobly had she reined in her grief in the tumultuous seas of those terrible days and launched her husband's star, but now it was time for her to weep and sleep, apart from men's sight. Writes Philip Booth in his poem "Thanksgiving 1963:"

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[1] Carol Berge, "Panave for the White Queen," in *Of Poetry and Power*, p. 121.

[2] Manchester, *Death of a President*, p. 347.

[3] A.P., *Torch Is Passed*, pp. 15, 57; U.P.I., *Four Days*, p. 130.

[4] Manchester, *Death*, pp. 510, 517. Jacqueline also kept a lock of Kennedy's hair. Marina Oswald did the ring bit also; *ibid*., p. 568.

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[1] For the transition, see Chapter IX, #3.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 629.

[3] Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 33, 52. Jacqueline was notably absent from the opening night performance at the Kennedy Center.

[4] White House chief usher West made this last allegation in his book Upstairs in the White House; cf. Manchester, Death, p. 645.

[5] Folklorists found the ultimate debunking graffito on a subway wall: "Jackie Kennedy picks her nose."

> She walks a beach assaulted by the sea.
> Gray waves horse the tide ashore. He
>
> sails far out, alone, beyond retreat.
> The muffled sea drums slowly on her heart.
>
> She walks against a wind that never sleeps.
> The sea originates and ends. She keeps
>
> the beachhead, reining in an empty horse.
> Her beachfire keeps long ships on their long course.
>
> Now may she sleep by how the slow sea breaks.
> And finally weep, this night of our dark thanks.[1]

The mawkish attentions paid to and by Jacqueline Kennedy on the assassination weekend and thereafter were entirely archaic; from a modern or historic perspective, she is of no interest and hardly merited becoming a "national institution." Although it might have been healthier for her and for us if she had done her grief work quickly, her tearless comportment and protracted mourning and memorialization were all designed to further exalt her husband along archaic lines. Despite her half-hearted protests, the public is still obsessed with Jacqueline, and, though she helped to build the myth which now "oppresses" her, it seems high time we let her go into that oblivion which she so richly deserves.

IV

In the process of remembering Jacqueline Kennedy was not only transformed into a heroine, but the assassin was also recast as a villain. Poetic imagination transmuted the assassination as it remembered it, giving cosmic, archetypal dimensions to an originally irrational human evil and raising Kennedy's status as it mythologized his assassination and his assassin. As the assassination was seen as an eruption of chaos forces (sea, wilderness, darkness), Kennedy was seen as a champion of light; as the assassin was seen as a villain (demonic creature, Judas, diabolic conspirator), Kennedy was seen as a hero and a prince. The need to make evil intelligible made Kennedy's apotheosis inevitable--almost irrespective of his merits.

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[1] Philip Booth, "Thanksgiving 1963," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 53.

Though seeing it as neither unique nor monumental, Gregory Corso saw Kennedy being assassinated as the "uncreation of the world."[1] He was joined by several other poets who made sense of the assassination by construing it not as an anomalous happening but as another episode in the eternal struggle between cosmos and chaos forces; between light and darkness, between garden and wilderness, between land and sea. In the Biblical myth, it is God who creates light out of darkness, who calms the raging seas and separates the land from them, who puts man in a garden in the wilderness,[2] who sends his rainbow after the flood, who sends his son to restore his vineyard, who surmounts the blackened sky of crucifixion with Easter's dawn, who promises a new world of harmony in which sea and night are no more.[3] By contrast, the poets and commentators often see no divine triumph in Kennedy's death. For David Ignatow, the "fine warm sun has been extinguished;" for Sorensen, the "brightest light of our times was suddenly snuffed out by a mindless evil;" for Sayre (and Schlesinger), Kennedy has left a "free and shining vapor trail across the skein of heaven" and disappeared into night.[4] For John Berryman and Josephine Miles, the pure madness of mad purity involved in Oswald's and Ruby's murderings seemed a return to wilderness, a sudden tromping of all Kennedy had cultivated.[1] In "Three Nights of Mourning," H. L. Mountzoures portrays Kennedy's being murdered by the dark, rapacious sea:

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[1] Gregory Corso, "Lines Written in Discord, November 22,23--1963," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 115.

[2] The garden is a favorite theme in American civil religion, both as an outpost of civilization in this pristine continent (in contrast to Indian savagery) and as a new order of the ages, God's green acre in this virgin land (in contrast to European corruption); read a one-dollar bill!

[3] See especially Gen. 1-2 and Rev. 21-22 for beginning and end.

[4] David Ignatow, "Before the Sabbath," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 23; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 846; Francis B. Sayre, Jr. in That Day With God, p. 195; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 939. Manchester cites Whitman's lament for Lincoln--"O great star disappeared, O black murk"--as his frontispiece. For new order and light images in Snow's poem, see Chapter V.

> The sea begins, far out beyond the light,
> His stalk in iron boots,
> Spitting foam, slobbering shells of teeth,
> Green-black rage spinning from his eyes--
> Advances, nearly swoons, begins to run,
> Arches, screams, pounds upon his victim's throat--

His deed done, the sea becomes a "dandy prince meandering," quite without remorse, oblivious to human tragedy or scale in his own imperturbable eternal majesty:

> He knows he cannot die.
> He has forgotten death and what a murder
> Is or may become. His brawny hands caress
> Skeletons of ships dangling on the rocks:
> He plucks a broken mast and uses it
> To pick his teeth.
> His business goes on. He is full
> Of holy passion...
> He is majesty. He must arise tomorrow,
> Feel the bottom of his bed to find what bone
> To no avail tried to irritate his sleep,
> His long alluvial dream.

Over such a sea, there is no triumph:

> No one walks on water here.
> No salvation, loaves of wondrous feeding.
> No nets of splendid fishes. Only the victim
> And the cold discarded spear.[2]

Yet even for Mountzoures, there is some light left, as the sun sets in melded rage and stars memorize all the bitter glory of the day. Both Kennedy and his assassin have had the human mixture of good and evil in both of them blanched out, so that Kennedy is clearly identified with the forces of goodness, and, although he may have succumbed to the evil forces of darkness, wilderness, and sea, there is still, in these terms, some hope.[1]

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[1] John Berryman, "Formal Elegy," and Josephine Miles, "Frontier," in Of Poetry and Power, pp. 44, 24. See Chapter VII, #1A and #2E.

[2] H. L. Mountzoures, "Three Nights of Mourning: John F. Kennedy," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 80.

Beast, betrayer, and devil images were also used to add subhuman, archetypally human, and superhuman dimensions to the rather absurd and colorless character of the alleged assassin, rendering him more comprehensible. Again, it is most usual in the world's religions to personify evil as some kind of beast or chaos dragon--whether India's Vṛtra or Eden's serpent (or later Jews' borrowed Leviathan) or Greece's Python or England's Grendel--as we noted in connection with the Cosmocrator myth developed around Kennedy.[2] Kennedy had bested the dragon many times, but now the tide was turned, in keeping with the ancient saga, and the dragon bested the hero, finally for some poets or, as the saga would have it, temporarily for others.

The least sinister form in which the beast was depicted was the riderless horse. Unlike other poets who saw the riderless horse as a benign bit of spirit rebelling against the order of death,[3] Robert Watson saw the riderless horse as symbolic of the chaos forces over which Kennedy had no control despite his mastery of the arts of civilization:

> Now six gray horses draw you to where you are,
> Not to Versailles, Sparta, or Athens.
> The seventh horse is wild and black
> And riderless and paws the streets of Washington
> Where you are rocking and will always rock.
>
> John Fitzgerald Kennedy,
> You could not stop the shells,
> The drowning of your boat in war;
> You could not stop the snow the sky sumped down,
> The cold, the lecturn smoking when your priest invoked
> The Lord, your poet struck blind, the bullets in your head,
> The six gray horses drawing you to where you are
> Rocking and will always rock.
>
> The seventh horse is riderless, wild, and black.[4]

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[1] For undauntable light imagery, see #5, below.

[2] See Chapter VI, above. [3] See the introduction to this chapter.

[4] Robert Watson, "Lines for a President," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 73.

For Donald Hall, the assassin is a mechanical metallic spider, and for Robert Skelton, his deed represents a history which is pure monster, piling bones and eating graves which people bring him, chanting.[1] Richard O'Connell sees the assassin slouching at the window changing his shape, seeming like a "huge centipede or serpent or strange dragon, . . . its unintelligible body gleaming dark and wet," perhaps taking the shape of a man.[2] Allan Maley of the Dallas A.F.L.-C.I.O. acknowledges the assassin not as a monster who intruded but as one we created like Frankenstein.[3] Lewis Turco recognizes the beast within as well as without, seeing our weaving the web that trapped Kennedy, but identifies us not only with the forces of evil but also, in hope, with the humane forces which Kennedy represented.[4] Dabney Stuart in "Toward Colonos" sees the assassination even more clearly as the eruption of the demonic side of all of us--represented by the Minotaur--and as an Oedipal self-blinding:

> The brute in us
> All taking abrupt shape
> In the quick darkness,
> For once the haphazard
> Labyrinth of our veins
> Stunned at its center
> By the still Minotaur,
>
> Or the terrific clarity
> When the bullets struck our eyes
> Like Jocaste's pins.[5]

The tortuous progress from subhuman to human modes of understanding the assassin culminated in his identification with Cain who slew his better brother and with Judas who slew his master.[1] Like Judas, the assassin becomes in Richard Eberhard's poem "The Killer" a kind of suicidal Christ-killer, who killed the man who "could have made my spirit free" and brought about his own annihilation, denied the justice he denied.[2] For Knight--using W. B. Yeats poem "Calvary" in his play--this Judas, by contrast, is triumphant, "Knowing that if a man betrays a God / He is the stronger of the two."[3]

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[1] Donald Hall, "Spider Head," and Robert Skelton, "History," in Of Poetry and Power, pp. 28, 32.

[2] Richard O'Connell, "Nekros," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 18.

[3] Allan Maley cited by U.P.I., Four Days, p. 61.

[4] Lewis Turco, "November 22, 1963," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 21; for identification with Kennedy in this poem, see Chapter VII, #3C.

[5] Dabney Stuart, "Toward Colonos," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 43.

But the most popular mythic guise for the evil in the assassination was Satanic, lifting it up to the superhuman plane where, in the Biblical myth, the strongest power to counteract evil also resides. Far from the nonchalant hate of Goldman's poem or the chancy action of a madman,[4] the assassination was remembered as an act of deliberate and calculated malevolence. And if Oswald's frail, pathetic shoulders were too slight to bear so weighty a deed, then he could be seen as an instrument in Satan's hands or in the hands of diabolic minions closer to hand, such as the Communists or the Mafia.[5] Conspiracy theories were very popular. While 72 per cent of the respondents in the National Opinion Research Center survey were pretty much convinced that Oswald was the assassin, 62 per cent believed that there were other people involved also.

Yet there is something odd in this finding, suggesting that conspiracy theories may have functioned more as reassurance than as belief, made little effort to see that the alleged conspirators were found and brought to justice by the authorities, and were hardly concerned at all a month later; at Wesleyan, full-blown conspiracy theories did not emerge until the day after Kennedy's funeral and were presented with an air of detachment.[1] Apparently, diabolizing the assassin with touches of cabalism added on was less threatening than acknowledging that there are "mentally ill people not responsible for their behaviour at large among us who are capable of capriciously ending even the life of a President."[2] Diabolization also reduced the disparity that had been felt between the "mad impulse of an insignificant man and the fall of the leader of a mighty nation."[3] By denying the fortuitousness of the event and restoring orderliness and predictability to the world in a primitive way, conspiracy theories--whatever their objective merit[4]--served to allay tension.[5] Observes Daniel Bell: "It takes a high degree of sophistication, Freud wrote, to believe in chance; primitive fears are allayed more easily by a devil theory of politics."[6] Faced with primal anxiety over the archetypal crime of parricide and exposed to their own vulnerability, most people resorted to a "manichean diabolism" to explain the assassination, Freedman asserts.[7] And as the assassin became more amd more in memory a villain, so Kennedy correspondingly became more and more a hero and a prince, and, if the Judas image is carried through, even a Christ (and thus, combining both, a Lincoln).

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 276, 278.

[2] Richard Eberhard, "The Killer," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 90.

[3] William Butler Yeats, "Calvary," cited by Knight, "Death of J. K.," p. 8.

[4] For the initial sense of incongruity, see Chapter VII, #2E.

[5] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," pp. 120, 122.

[6] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 164.

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[1] Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 173-174; Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 238.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 174.

[3] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 227; see Chapter VII, #2E.

[4] Who actually killed Kennedy is beyond the scope of this thesis; for our purposes, it is sufficient to note that Oswald was credited with it.

[5] Greenstein, "College Students' Reactions," p. 233, and "Young Men and Death," p. 197.

[6] Daniel Bell, End of Ideology, p. 193, cited by Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 173.

[7] Dr. Freedman underlying Kirkham, Assassination, p. 94.

Modernism can but look askance at the whole process of giving a poetic interpretation to the assassination, for it lives at the surface of life where things are obvious and reasonable, unequipped to deal with the deeper manifestations of good or of evil and uninterested in any scheme which will give the whole experienced universe coherence.[1] An historic perspective is skeptical also about the knowledge of good and evil and about any attempt to resolve the ambiguities of history in which good and evil are mixed to the end,[2] and it can only rejoice when American innocence and self-righteousness are broken open and there is some recognition of the tragic side of life, so missing in American civil religion,[3] of the dark, incessant sea or the wilderness in our garden or the beast and betrayer and even the devil in each of us which often render us powerless as Kennedy was; but it also believes in the ultimate triumph of righteousness over the forces of evil, whether elemental or human or demonic, and in a power which so comprehends evil that darkness is as light with him. There are glimmers of such an historic faith even in the poetic probings of the depth of evil involved in the assassination, but the predominant popular response is, again, archaic, restoring a broken world in which real chance and failure could not be allowed to enter, diabolizing the assassin in a manichean fashion which strips him of good and us of evil, and conjuring up a conspiracy of those satanic hosts against whom good Americans are ranged--yet mollified by a relative dearth of retributive anger and action.[4]

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[1] For pragmatic put-downs of metaphysics, theology, and ontology, see Chapter IV, #3 and Chapter V, #4, above.

[2] Based on Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares, this is a favorite theme of Reinhold Niebuhr; it also appears in Schlesinger's portrayal of Kennedy moving from a devil theory of international politics to a recognition of it as a complex and intricate drama--see Chapter V, #4.

[3] This is a central thesis in Novak's Choosing Our King (pp. 292-298).

[4] See Chapter VII, #2E.

XUM

V

The internationalization of grief, the world-wide memorialization process, the elevation of his widow, and the diabolization of his assassin facilitated the final conversion of Kennedy into a messianic sacred king recast from a mythic mold ages old and continually reused. Repetition is at the heart of religious rites from the periodic clan rededication ceremonies of primitive Australia to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when the Messiah's death is re-presented again and again until he comes. Repetition is also at the heart of the myth of the death of the sacred king, recurring in the cycles of history and in holiday and dramatic remembrances. Shakespeare writes in Julius Caesar:

> How many ages hence
> Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
> In states unborn and accents yet unknown![1]

Indeed, repetition is at the heart of our religious inheritance, inviolable in archaic religions and prominent in historic ones.[2] T. S. Eliot cites and expands a line from the Bhagavad Gita in order to elucidate the significance of the martyrdom of Thomas á Becket, and Knight uses this passage again both to introduce and conclude his play The Death of J. K.:

> Neither does the agent suffer
> Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
> In an eternal action, an eternal patience,
> To which all must consent that it may be willed,
> And all must suffer that they may will it,
> That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
> And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
> Be forever still.[3]

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[1] William Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar III.i.111-113, cited by Knight, Death of J. K., pp. 3, 18.

[2] The importance of exact repetition and the meaninglessness of novelty in the archaic world is clearly brought out by Eliade in Cosmos and History. St. Paul had difficulty in asserting historic Christian freedom against those who wished to repeat the old feasts; he lost--see Galatians 5.

[3] T. S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, cited by Knight, Death of J. K., pp. 2, 18.

In the process of remembrance (anamnesis), Kennedy was conformed to an eternal pattern drawn from the myth of the sacred king coalesced with an ecclesiastical myth of the Messiah which had once been distinguished from it and undermined it.

When historic religion first entered the world, it tore apart the fusion of cultic and governmental lordship in the archaic sacred king. The early Christian church, for instance, took shape in the context of the rivalry between Christ and Caesar. Although the scriptures tend to heap blame upon the Jews who turned him in, Jesus was actually executed by the Roman government. At his trial, he was accused of advocating resistance to Caesar's taxes and claiming to be a king himself, and it is clear that, when a test question was put to him earlier, he advocated "rendering to Caesar" only the coins with Caesar's "divine" image on them, which a good Jew would not have in his possession anyway, rendering all to God in a way which would preclude such idolatrous collaboration. Jesus' trial was set forth as the confrontation between rival kings with Jesus being the lord of the truth whose kingdom was not of this world while Pilate received his power also from above and conceded that Jesus crowned with thorns was the Messiah, putting a sign on his cross in four languages, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." The slogan of the early church, kyrios christos (like its earliest creed "Jesus is Lord," I Cor. 12:3) also rivaled the Roman slogan kyrios kaisar, and the "non-loyalty" of Christians was a source both of their own persecution and of the undermining of the Roman empire. Yet historic Christianity was never able to completely scotch the religious pretensions of political rulers, even at its zenith, nor to preclude, during its subsequent decline, their appropriation of its messianism.[1] The upshot is the availability of a pattern of archaic sacred kingship intensified by the inadvertant contribution of ecclesiastical religion to it, a fusion of Christ and Caesar figures in a new lord of both heaven and earth, whose death marks the transition from temporal might to spiritual ascendancy. 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished!

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[1] For growth in the power and prestige of the state, see Chapter III.

In a manner more explicit than most, Nicholas Knight identifies Kennedy with Christ and Caesar by juxtaposing passages from the New Testament and from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar with prose and poems about Kennedy's death and significance in his play The Death of J. K.--with "J. K." standing alike for John Kennedy, Julius Caesar, and Jesus Christ. A fourth reader provides the overall mythic framework and introduces each new, yet old, motif in this unchanging drama. With this kind of juxtaposition in this kind of frame, the elements of the Kennedy saga which Knight uses take on intensified significance. The drama is set with Jesus, Julius, and John being warned or advised of the danger but remaining determined, nevertheless, to go to Jerusalem, Rome, and Dallas.[1] The drama begins with the triumphal entry of the king figure amid the tumultuous welcome of the multitudes strewing flowers in his path, shortly before a feast (Passover, Lupercal, Thanksgiving). The betrayer (Judas, Brutus, Oswald) is a former friend, envious, possessed, at war with himself, whose deed bears Oedipal overtones of parricide and matrigamy and is followed by a repudiation of money in a virtual suicide. In his last hours, the sacred king, once rescued from water and now growing infirm, shares wine and garden with friends and then submits, forgivingly, to betrayal, stripping, spitting, and derision (ironically expressing his true significance); in his final hours, he is given over to God-forsakenness, reflected in disruption of time and nature, and to bleeding and death, but rises again and communes with his followers.

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[1] Dallas was not axis mundi (like Jerusalem and Rome), but Kennedy's passion was politics and he felt he had to go; Manchester, Death, p. 3.

Such a full-blown mythic portrayal of Kennedy was unusual; it was much more common to link Kennedy to Caesar and to Christ more indirectly through terms like "hero" and "martyr" and through the figure of Lincoln who united them already. These appellations, occasionally supplemented by more direct references to Caesar or Christ, could be applied to the dead President without explanation as if they were ordinary names at the same time that they tied Kennedy back to the most ancient myths.

In death, according to Time, John Kennedy became a hero.[1] The term "hero," which is suggestive of superhuman qualities in classical mythology, was used incessantly of Kennedy, almost casually as if there were no doubt about its appropriateness.[2] In Yugoslavia, Ramo Ramovic called Kennedy a "great hero" in his ballad; in London, the Sunday Times in its November 24th edition called him the "one authentic hero of the postwar world;" a patient called him a "shiney knight on a white charger."[3] Kennedy had been a hero for many in life, and, even as they rued his loss, they could still revere him as a hero in their dreams and pilgrimages. Writes Reston:

> There was something vaguely legendary about Kennedy. He was a storybook President, younger and more handsome than mortal politicians, remote even from his friends, graceful, almost elegant, with poetry on his tongue and a radiant young woman at his side. . . . What was killed at Dallas was not only the President but the promise, the death of youth and the hope of youth, of the beauty and grace and the touch of magic. The heart of the Kennedy legend is what he might have been. His intelligence made people think the coming generation might make the world more rational. Good looks and eloquence put a shine on politics. All this is apparent in the faces of the people who come to his grave daily on Arlington hill. In the world of their dreams, Presidents would be young and heroic, with beautiful wives, and the ugly world would be transformed by their example.[4]

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[1] Time, January 5, 1970, p. 11. [2] E.g., Manchester, Death, pp. 446, 511.
511.

[3] Goldman, World Remembers, p. 102; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 132; Greenstein, "Private Disorder and Public Order," p. 266 (see Chapter VII, #2C).

[4] Reston, "What Was Killed Was the Promise," p. 230. For other expressions of loss of promise before it was redreamt, see Chapter VII, #2D.

Making Kennedy the folk hero they wanted him to be, Americans saw Kennedy as "young, princely, dashing, handsome, charming."[1] And they transformed his death to fit the image, making him into a warrior chieftain or warrior king.[2] No longer a politician who had gone to Texas to campaign and whose death would have been "questionable" under those circumstances, they painted not only his funeral but also his death in military colors, death in battle requiring no justification.[3] President de Gaulle said, "President Kennedy died like a soldier, under fire, in the line of duty, and in the service of his country," and preachers reiterated the theme, either quoting de Gaulle or stating it in other words, such as: "In the end, Mr. Kennedy fell in the line of duty" or "He literally died for his country."[4]

The swiftness of Kennedy's death and his look of youth were also given heroic proportions. "He was alive to the very end," wrote White,[5] and Jacqueline Kennedy expanded the thought in language borrowed from the description, which Kennedy loved, of World War I heroes who died in battle:

> Now he will never know more--not age, nor stagnation, nor despair, nor crippling illness, nor loss of any more people he loved. His high noon kept all the freshness of the morning--and he died then, never knowing disillusionment.[6]

A Briton who promised to remember Kennedy at the rising and the setting of the sun cited the line, "Those whom the gods love die young," in her memory book entry, and General Wehle recalled the mystique of the athlete dying young, brought home shoulder-high again when dead as he had been when laurels early crowned his head.[1] For Myron LeVoy, Kennedy's death took on the colors of a Western hero, carried shoulder-high to the mesa for burial.[2] For Robert Hazel, Kennedy laid his head "on the thin fabric of law between reason and chaos," moving with heroic bravery from the world of divine innocence and civilization into the wild West on an "errand into the wilderness:"

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 624. [2] Ibid., p. 563.

[3] For the meaning of death in battle in the religion of war, see Chapter VII, #3D.

[4] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 134; William F. O"Brien, Roger L. Fredrickson, and Norman Vincent Peale in That Day With God, pp. 15, 117, 75.

[5] White, Making President 1964, p. 14.

[6] Manchester, Death, p. 646.

> Leave the flattering libraries, the graceful Eastern towns.
> Leave the untold beads and the uncounted leaves of grass.
> Leave the blue panes of cathedrals, the red letter of law,
> the white silence of poetry.
> Take yourself to Texas in an open car.
> Be for one moment the advertised Zero of infantile people:
> rich boy in a big car, hair wild, teeth clean:
> young god without wound.
>
> West is the place to die; it stands for death.
> No law except chance and impulse in that country:
> land blazing and sterile, cold with the howls
> of sun-crazed and moon-frozen animals
> with torn fur, then sun on the carcasses.
> West is the place to die, my President.[3]

Thus even the flaw in the Kennedy saga of failing to die in the axis mundi, where the sacred king is supposed to die, was worked around as heroid reasons were found for his dying where he did.

The mythologization of Kennedy as hero easily merged into the image of king. Beyond the Camelot trappings of the Kennedy reign and the largely unconscious feelings of his loss as a sacred king,[4] the commentators who shaped our memory of the dead Kennedy also helped to keep the king image alive. Manchester saw Kennedy's death in the popular mind as the vestigial repetition of the autumnal sacrifice of the prince who would ascend to heaven to temper the wrath of the Almighty in order to assure a green and

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 135; Manchester, Death, p. 401.

[2] Myron LeVoy, "Out of the West of Lucky Riders," in Of Poetry and Power, pp. 54-55; see the epigraph to this chapter.

[3] Robert Hazel, "West to Dallas," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 64.

[4] See Chapters IV and VII, #2.

XUM

abundant spring.[1] Wolfenstein was reminded of the lamentations over the death of the Great Duke, as Tennyson celebrated it, while Lee Radziwill trowed Washington like Versailles after the king had died and Verba found the story of Kennedy of a piece with the sad stories of the death of kings told for God's sake in Shakespearean tragedy.[2] Even Caesar himself crops up as the hero's mask in Fraser's celebration of Kennedy's funeral:

> In bright gray sun, processionals
> Of pomp and honor, and of grief,
> Crown that dead head
> With coronals.
> Some stony hearts feel some relief:
>
> But not your heart, America,
> Beating so slow and sure and strong,
> Stricken in his
> Triumphal car,
> Guard Caesar's bitter laurels long
>
> With soldiers' music, rites of war:
> He had proved bravely when put on![3]

Even more than "hero," Kennedy was called "martyr" repeatedly, almost as a matter of course.[4] Indeed, Kennedy's martyrdom as used as an explanation for other phenomena. According to Manchester, martyrdom transformed Kennedy, clothing him in romance and investing him with magic and also elevating his widow; it made a myth of the mortal man, produced a mystique, etc.[5] Wolfenstein also saw increased idealization of, and desire to perpetuate, Kennedy resulting from his death, which she more circumspectly called "a death resembling martyrdom."[1] However, even resemblances to classical martyrdom were few. The root meaning of the word "martyr" is "witness," and the word "martyr" was used of those who witnessed to their faith, especially if that witness resulted in, and was dramatized by, their deaths. Laying one's life down willingly in witness was part of the original meaning of martyrdom. At first blush, and now again in retrospect, being involuntarily assassinated by a mentally unstable person who has nothing against him while on a motorcade on a politicking trip seems to partake very little of martyrdom (just as it is not inherently heroic). But people who were grossly disturbed by the assassination found that to make Kennedy a martyr made his death much more intelligible, and they did it. Far from being a source of myth, Kennedy's "martyrdom" is itself a key construct in the mythologizing process through which people made his death meaningful and preserved him for their own use. But his lack of witness was a continuing problem. The exhortation of the N.B.C. commentator--"A martyr dies in vain if he does not inspire others. Americans must remember what Kennedy stood for"[2]--suggests that it may require some effort to remember what Kennedy stood for but that doing so is mandatory in order to complete Kennedy's martyrdom and prevent his death from being meaningless. Likewise, the preachers, as we noted, who constantly referred to Kennedy as a martyr, found it hard to find anything but platitudes to associate with Kennedy in their exhortations to identify with his values.[3]

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 623.

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 217; Manchester, Death, p. 546; Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 348.

[3] G. S. Fraser, "Instead of an Elegy," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 31.

[4] Earl Warren and Louis I. Newman in That Day With God, pp. 187, 97; St. Louis Post-Dispatch and condolence books cited by U.P.I., Four Days, pp. 132, 134; and by Manchester, Death, p. 511.

[5] Manchester, Death, pp. 322; 351; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 854; Harrison Salisbury, "Introduction" to Warren Report, cited by Knight, Death of J. K., p. 18.

Although Amerigo Tot, the Italian sculptor who built a monument of walls and nails to Kennedy in the Borghese Gardens in Rome was an exception in seeing Kennedy as a martyr who lost,-saying, "Kennedy was surrounded by a thousand walls--of race, nationality, inequality, everything--all the stupid rivalries there are, and he tried to break them down but he never quite succeeded because he was killed,"[1] most saw some kind of survival or success in Kennedy's martyrdom. For Maude Shaw and Ethel Kennedy, as we noted, Kennedy had gone to heaven but was showering down graces as a guardian angel.[2] For Jacqueline Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey, he haunted his ancestral home or grave, "alive as he will always be in his beloved Ireland," standing "as a constant sentinel over the nation's capital."[3] Rothenberg, Manchester, and Mark ascribe a more portable immortality to him,[4] seeing Kennedy as returned with him from burial, still living in hearts as "a watchman of honor who never sleeps," who "still lives in the acts of goodness he performed and in the hearts of those who will ever cherish his memory."[5] But the triumph of his ideals seems the most common completion of martyrdom ascribed to him. In dedicating a huge monument in Quemu-Quemu, Argentina, resembling an upside-down cross and designed to make the "wings of Kennedy soar in eternal exaltation," Governor Ismael Amit viewed Kennedy's "New Frontier" both as the fulfillment of the revolution of 1776 and as Kennedy's survival after his death, concluding, "John F. Kennedy has triumphed in America because above all the vicissitudes that his ideals may undergo, the imprint of his life has left an indelible mark on the spirit of the American man."[6] More simply, Charles Allen asserted:

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 231.

[2] Cited by Knight, Death of J. K., p. 16.

[3] See Chapter VII, #3C.

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[1] Goldman, World Remembers, p. 79.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 406, 416: see Chapter VII, #1C.

[3] Goldman, World Remembers, p. 68; Manchester, Death, p. 598.

[4] Akin to the need for portable memorials, see #2, above.

[5] Jerome G. Rothenberg, "Cortege," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 78; Manchester, Death, dedication; Julius Mark in That Day With God, p. 92.

[6] Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 17-19

> Let us remember that physical bodies can be killed, but great ideas and ideals never die. One thinks of Abraham Lincoln, who was killed a hundred years ago. One thinks of Jesus Christ, who was killed two thousand years ago. One thinks of John F. Kennedy, who was killed two days ago.[1]

Already the link is forged from Kennedy to Jesus with Lincoln in between.

Since Jesus was the original Christian martyr, it is not surprising that portrayals of Kennedy as a martyr with some kind of survival of his death merge into analogies to Christ. Often the reference is indirect: commentators will speak of Kennedy's "sacrifice" or his "laying down his life;"[2] poets will speak of Kennedy being nailed up "on the cross of a rifle sight" or his blood blooming into roses and cactus on the desert as Christ blossoms in bread and wine on the altar;[3] preachers will liken the loss of Kennedy to the disciples' experience of the loss of Jesus and give an Easter summons--prefigured in earlier preachers' responses to Lincoln's death on Good Friday--to believe in Kennedy's continuing life and to get on with their own.[4] Sometimes the identification is more explicit. Believing that the vitality of the mission of Christ derives from his death and subsequent resurrection and that the spread and development of Christianity is a direct result of the "Christian willingness to face death for the Faith and to accept martyrdom," William L. Kelligar assimilates Kennedy to this train, seeing God the Father as having taken the life of his adopted son John as He exacted the life of his own Son and seeing the impact of Kennedy's death, on the same pattern, becoming stronger.[5] Conforming Kennedy's martyrdom to Christ's, Kelligar also cites the passage through which Jesus interpreted his impending death to his disciples, "Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends," a passage which Norman Vincent Peale and Roger Fredrickson also apply to Kennedy's giving of his "last full measure."[1] Samuel H. Miller bids his listeners to remember Kennedy's sacrifice and the cost he paid for bearing the sins of us all, and Adrien Stoutenburg also suggests a substitutionary atonement in seeing Kennedy as the "one of us (who) stood up and faced the rifle that is always aimed, / and left the image that we keep."[2] As both hero and martyr, Abraham K. Akaka claims that "John F. Kennedy gave his life not only for his country but primarily and rightly for God and all mankind," and, substituting Kennedy for Christ (who has been traditionally regarded as the church's one foundation), Cardinal Cushing put Kennedy forward as a "symbol of love for God, country, and all mankind" on whose foundation a new world must be built.[3] Most grandiose of all, Joseph J. Neuville, portraying Kennedy as a "martyr to the image of fraternity and paternity of the American President," prays, in words borrowed from the Mass itself, that the sacrifice of Kennedy may "ascend in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty with a sweet savor, for our own salvation and for that of the whole world."[4]

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[1] Charles Allen in That Day With God, p. 28.

[2] Louisville Courier cited by U.P.I., Four Days, p. 132; Manchester, Death, pp. 161, xii.

[3] X. J. Kennedy, "Down in Dallas," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 127. For other poets' use of Communion imagery, see #3, above.

[4] Robert L. Edwards in That Day With God, p. 109.

[5] William L. Kelligar in That Day With God, pp. 168-169.

Direct identification of Kennedy with Caesar or with Christ was actually rather rare, in part, because they were already implicit in the Lincoln myth with which Kennedy was repeatedly clothed. Although the reference to

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[1] That Day With God, ed. by William Fine, pp. 169, 74, 117.

[2] Samuel H. Miller in That Day With God, p. 38; Adrien Stoutenburg, "Channel USA--Live," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 101.

[3] Abraham K. Akaka in That Day With God, pp. 46-47; Richard Cardinal Cushing, "Eulogy," p. 8. For Kennedy as a model Christian for these men and other preachers, see Chapter VII, #3C.

[4] Joseph J. Neuville in That Day With God, p. 149.

Caesar is muted in Lincoln's case and the imperator role has grown considerably in the twentieth century, kingship was already a part of the presidency Lincoln inherited and that earlier "captain . . . fallen, cold, and dead" also had his share of awe-evoking military power, functioning as a virtual dictator for several weeks during the Civil War. But the new thing which Lincoln's death brought into American civil religion was not only the recurrence of the myth of the death of the sacred king, intensifying the kingship aspect, but also the themes of sacrifice and rebirth, largely derived from Christianity though used to enhance the religion of war.[1] In death, Lincoln was linked to Christ in the Easter sermons which followed hard upon it and was clothed in the symbolism of his own Gettysburg Address and of the Battle Hymn of the Republic--which unites the religion of brotherhood and the religion of war by viewing Christ's dying to make men holy as of a piece with our dying to make men free; Lincoln became, in effect, "the martyred Christ of democracy's passion play."[2] Afterwards, the Lincoln legend and legacy became part of the office of the Presidency so that his successors ascended to Lincoln's office, slept in Lincoln's bed,[3] and if killed in office, joined Lincoln in his heroic martyrdom, regardless of the circumstances of their deaths or of the character of their lives.

Since the myth of the sacred king and the myth of the Messiah had already been infused into the Lincoln myth and recast in terms of the American experience, identification of Kennedy with Lincoln contained, and made unnecessary, references to Caesar and Christ, and terms such as "hero" and "martyr," redefined more in the light of Lincoln than in their original meanings, could easily be applied to Kennedy. It was no more necessary for Kennedy than it had been for Lincoln to actually die in battle for their deaths to be construed as such in an heroic mold, and in each case their own words glorifying death in battle helped to facilitate the mythic construction. It was also unnecessary for Kennedy, in contrast to Lincoln, to stand for much to be seen as a martyr, in part, because an apparently common rhetoric of freedom helped to initially obscure their differences. Kennedy and Lincoln were especially linked in the cause of Negro rights. Edgar F. Magnin saw the two as different in wealth, education, and religion, but both being sorrow-laden, loving people, devoted to America and to peace and both of them being religious at heart, influenced by the Bible, and believing in God and in the brotherhood of man; inspired by Lincoln and Kennedy together, he urged his people to rededicate themselves to creating an America with freedom and justice for all, including Negroes.[1] Echoing the sentiments of many who saw Kennedy as a "Second Emancipator President," A. Philip Randolph said, "His place in history will be next to Abraham Lincoln."[2] Kennedy was also placed next to Lincoln on commemorative medals abroad. A German medal has "both martyred Presidents" interlinked--with their faces on one side and on the other side a Negro family with outstretched shackled hands holding a laurel branch subscribed with the legend, "You can stop men: you cannot stop their ideas."[3] A Mexican medal shows Kennedy on one side with the caption "Paladin de los derechos civiles" (knight of civil rights), and on the other side Lincoln, with crossed hands in front of a flag freeing slaves, captioned "Liberator de

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[1] See Bellah, Beyond Belief, pp. 176-179.

[2] Rossiter, American Presidency, p. 102.

[3] It is perhaps symbolically significant that Jacqueline Kennedy had the inscription about Kennedy and herself living in the White House put under the Lincoln inscription out side the presidential bedroom; see #3.

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[1] Edgar F. Magnin in That Day With God, p. 161; for a longer quotation of Magnin's plea for rededication, see Chapter VII, #3C.

[2] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 937; see Chapter VI, #6.

[3] Goldman, World Remembers, p. 120.

los asclavos."[1] Cross and flag are also joined in a Canadian medal with the Lincolnesque caption, "He died for the sake of freedom."[2] Honduras and Togo overprinted Lincoln stamps with in memoriams to Kennedy, suggesting, writes Goldman, "the greatness of President Kennedy beside the Great Emancipator."[3] Perhaps, the greatest identification, not to say confusion, of Kennedy with Lincoln in the cause of civil rights appears in the remark of a twelve-year-old boy after a day his school devoted to the study of Kennedy, "Now I know why President Kennedy wanted to abolish slavery."[4]

The most telling re-presentation of Kennedy as Lincoln, however, took place not at the level of words but within the funeral rites themselves. Those who planned Kennedy's state funeral took pains to model it after Lincoln's, sending seven scholars into the Libaray of Congress on the night of the assassination to research Lincoln's funeral ceremonies.[5] At the White House, Kennedy's flag-draped coffin was placed on a replica of Lincoln's catafalque in an East Room decorated in keeping with the Lincoln engraving printed in the White House tour book.[6] In the Capitol rotunda, surrounded by friezes and paintings depicting American history under a dome completed during Lincoln's administration, Kennedy's coffin lay upon the original Lincoln catafalque. Walking behind the caisson from the Capitol to the church also had its precedent in Lincoln's and other presidential funerals. The mood of the funeral march--the enormous crowds, the muffled drums, the profound silence--were also seen as reminiscent of Lincoln.[7] Even if you doubted that Kennedy was another Lincoln while he lived, you could not do so after the funereal ceremonies were over, suggests William F. O'Brien, in a way that clearly expresses repetition:

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[1] Goldman, *World Remembers*, p. 120.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[5] White, *Making President 1964*, p. 20; Manchester, *Death*, p. 420.

[6] Manchester, *Death*, p. 437; U.P.I., *Four Days*, pp. 69, 45.

[7] U.P.I., *Four Days*, pp. 78, 74; Manchester, *Death*, pp. 540, 485.

> President John F. Kennedy, during his campaign in 1960, more than once expressed his consuming passion to serve his country with the same spirit as Lincoln. Cynics accused him of being brash and presumptuous to set his aim so high. But if one has followed the events which have transpired since last Friday, if you have listened to the words of people around the world of high and low estate, if you have witnessed that endless procession of mourners at our National Capitol, estimated at half a million, if you attended by television this morning the ceremonies in Washington at St. Matthew's Cathedral and Arlington, if you observed the greatest convocation of government dignitaries ever assembled in our nation, then I believe you would never dispute again that the death of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, nearly one hundred years after that of Lincoln, is history repeating itself.[1]

The link to Lincoln was firmest forged toward the end of the funereal ceremonies. The band fell silent and only the drums were heard as Kennedy's funeral procession passed the Lincoln Memorial, and many looked upward at its brooding face of stone as they passed. Lincoln seemed to share the nation's grief. Cartoonist Bill Mauldin drew Lincoln holding his head in his hands, and poet Stanley Koehler wrote:

> The carriage circles a green park
> with its temple, the dark
> porch where the Form in his chair
> sheds a marble tear
> for what is fated like him.[2]

After the burial, the Kennedy car paused again at the Lincoln Memorial, and a month after the assassination a thousand people, with one candle lighting the next, carried fire from the eternal flame at dusk to the Lincoln Memorial, bringing the light back to its source.[3]

Light, eternal light symbolized by the 'lux perpetua' of the funeral and the eternal flame on Kennedy's grave on the "hill that watches Lincoln,"[4] is the chief symbol of Kennedy's continuing presence. Light shining in the darkness and not overcome was symbolized not only by the blazing torches of the Berlin and Berne parades or the mass of candles in the New York and Washington processions, but also by the single candles which individuals, such as Kennedy's dog handler and Ruth Paine, lit as their way of praying.[1] "A single sunbeam is enough to drive away many shadows," said President Johnson, quoting from St. Francis in his dedication of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and alluding both to the light Kennedy had given and the light the Center would give.[2] Buffeted, ageless, inspiring, simple, Stanley Koehler saw the tiny, persistent eternal flame at Arlington as a symbol of hope:

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[1] William F. O'Brien in That Day With God, pp. 14-15.

[2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 117; Stanley Koehler, "In Arlington Cemetery," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 50.

[3] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 940.

[4] Jerome G. Rotherberg, "Cortege," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 78.

> A flame burns
> in the air, not a leaf
> to shelter it, blown like our grief,
> variable and new, endless and old...
>
> The flame leaps up. Fresh as our vow,
> it makes a gentle monument at night
> with the simplicity of light.[3]

More assertively, Ralph Gordon sees light as the one thing death cannot take from Kennedy as he continues to illumine his country's life:

> Death draws from a man
> All but the light he has won; there he stands
> Unshadowed, the brave stance, smiling,
> The bitter joy of days fought,
> And the love of the new day upon him; there
> Visited well
> By all faithful hopes,
> Let him stand, his country-to-be alive in his eyes.

Portraying the eternal flame as a continuation of what Kennedy stood for, a Canadian medal captions its picture with "And so let the word go forth that the torch has been lit," and a United States stamp rims it, as if

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 205.

[2] Goldman, World Remembers, p. 142

[3] Stanley Koehler, "In Arlington Cemetery," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 50.

[4] Ralph Gordon, "J. F. K.," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 56.

XUM

adding on, "And the glow from that fire can truly light the world."[1] As we have relived the assassination annually for ten years through the United States Information Agency memorial film "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," we are reminded of Kennedy's continuing glow and of the torch passed on to us, inspired by a Kennedy who has become, in memory, an entirely spiritual presence:

> All of this was in the early 1960's. Someday, it will be a long time ago. The persistence of the present will force memory into the back of our minds. The shock will be gone, the drums muffled. Arlington will see another spring and snow. But in the lives of those who lived in those days, there will always be those moments when they hear that Boston-accented voice saying, "Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans."
>
> The day of drums is gone, but the years of lightning continue to glow in everyone he touched and continues to touch. . . . John F. Kennedy is now silent and invisible: so are peace and freedom, so are love and faith, and so are memories and dreams.[2]

John Kennedy ended as he had begun, as a dream. He had begun with no claim to power except the dreams and promises he sought to share, and he ended with no claim to power except that of memories and dreams. Yet he ended with more power than he had begun, for we had become his subjects in the meantime. At each stage, Kennedy's hold over us and the myth that undergirded it changed and grew. In his presidential campaign, Kennedy exercised a personal charisma, by which he attracted a majority of voters to himself and his lofty, strident promises of a New Frontier; once in the presidency, his hold and myth took a "quantum jump" as he was invested with the charisma of office, giving him the authority to command our loyalties, undergirded by the age-old presidential myth and intensified by his own distinctive use of Camelot, Contemperor, and Cosmocrator myths; after his death, his grip and myth took another "quantum jump" as he inherited what I call mythic charisma, being clothed with the vestments of hero and martyr, of Caesar and Christ, of Lincoln and lord of light, increasing his power over our hearts all the more.[1] Yet we need now to stand back and examine this final stage in order to understand its peculiar dynamics. The full-blown Kennedy myth was born at a time when we had no control over it. Like the assassination itself, it caught us "unawares" with our critical faculties in abeyance. We had been invaded, and we needed to defend ourselves; our world had a big hole in it, and we needed to close it; a fatal malady had beset us, and we needed the strongest medicine possible. We needed to hold onto Kennedy even as he was taken from us; we needed to spiritualize him and also to keep sacramental tokens of his presence; we needed to repeat church and state funerals for him exactly as they had been laid down by timeless tradition and in the Lincoln precedents, and then we needed to repeatedly remember that sacred time. All this had very little to do with Kennedy himself or with our own conscious minds. It was a time when archetypes reigned. The President's widow was bound to be elevated and his assassin was bound to be diabolized and Kennedy was bound to be apotheosized along the lines of the Lincoln myth--almost without regard to his own character (or theirs)--for the roles had been fixed from time immemorial. We did what mankind has always done in the face of catastrophe: we regressed to our most primitive selves and trundled out our most archaic magic.

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[1] Goldman, World Remembers, pp. 128, 115.

[2] Personally transcribed by myself from repeated television broadcasts.

But magic no longer works as well as it did, for we no longer live in a completely archaic world. We live in a world where symbols are and must be broken. As we gain some distance from the assassination, we need, if not to "demythologize," at least to "deliteralize" the Kennedy myth in

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[1] For the political meaning and consequences of mythic charisma, see Chapter IX, #4.

XUM

order to liberate its symbols to point beyond themselves;[1] we need to dedramatize the Kennedy masque, knowing that masks can obscure as well as reveal;[2] and we need not to dismiss but to work through the Kennedy experience, so that it may become an integral part of our experience and not a fixation. Just as we have put away the memorial books, we need to relinquish our obsession with Jacqueline Kennedy and let her go on to be whomever she has become; we need to stop second-guessing the "who done it" aspects of the assassination, except as a curious hobby, and let the assassin, whoever he may be, return to obscurity; and we need to stop making repeated visits to Kennedy's grave and let him go, finally, to his grave himself. For now we can see that Kennedy never quite fit the archaic mold in which he was put, can recognize the role our own needs played in the mythologization process, and can sort out the myths which really illuminate Kennedy from those with which we clothed him merely out of the demands of the times.

The passage of time does not guarantee but it does encourage a more historic perspective (just as the immediacy of Kennedy's murder encouraged but did not require an archaic one). From a lengthening historic perspective, we can see that Kennedy was not superhuman, was not unlimited in power or knowledge or goodness, was not even all a man should be, but was one man among others, a mixture of good and evil (as was his assassin) in a world which has a permanent tragic dimension. If he is to be a hero--and surely not the "one authentic hero" of the postwar world--let him not be a martial hero who died in battle but a hero of peace, for whom we had no ready rites, which is how the West Germans remembered him in their more historic memorial to him being less bound, as foreigners usually are, to the "single vision" and nationalistic constrictions of our peculiar archaisms. If Kennedy is to be a martyr--and hardly the most dedicated one we can think of--let him be so on his own merits, not merely by virtue of the circumstances of his death--for, from an historic perspective, it is the character of one's witness which finally counts where martyrdom is concerned. Writes Wolfenstein:

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[1] See Introduction, #1, above.

[2] Ibid.; e.g., for Novak, images obscure while symbols reveal. In the play Carnival, a shy man reveals himself through puppets and then finally more fully as himself, "face to face;" it is an illuminating parable.

> The influence of a murdered leader on the formation of ideals and conscience in those who witness his death and in later generations is no doubt related to how clearly and strongly he embodied important and novel principles. Thus Lincoln has contributed to our national heritage of ideals as McKinley, for instance, has not.[1]

On Kennedy's ultimate impact, Wolfenstein reserves judgment, it being too soon to tell, but it seems clear to me that Kennedy is hardly another Lincoln and surely not another Jesus Christ or a source of salvation, and it strikes me that preachers, if they are to be guardians of historic Christian faith, should keep some tension between loyalties to Christ and to worldly rulers, should retain Christ himself as the foundation of the new world they seek, and should use the title "martyr" in keeping with its historic meaning.

Kennedy seems more unlike than like Lincoln. There is a not dissimilar temporizing with the timing of freeing the slaves and a degree of glorification of the religion of war in Lincoln, but there is also an historic sense of transcendent divine judgment, a humility, a search for reconciliation ("with malice toward none"), and a religious sensibility--outstripping contemporary clergy on public issues, according to Reinhold Niebuhr--which sets him apart from Kennedy. Although the Kennedy assassination was a "paradigmatic event," which raised deep questions and pointed beyond itself, the Kennedy myth seems to be more of a footnote to the Lincoln myth than a lasting myth in its own right which could embrace the nation's faith, values, and elemental confidences and interpret extended tracts of history.[2]

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. xix.

[2] Harvey, Historian and Believer, pp. 253-258.

CHAPTER IX

SUCCESSION

> The world goes on with what it has.
> Its reasoned, right and only code.
> Coaxing with military faith,
> The tilt and jangle of this death.
> --Gwendolyn Brooks

After the assassination weekend, America returned to its usual pursuits. Like the typical soldier who does not question the purpose of a war, most Americans simply went on with what they had to do without ever fully resolving the meaning of the event which had overtaken them. The end of the assassination weekend brought the modern viewpoint, which had been shouldered aside for the duration, back if not to complete dominance at least into strong competition as the nation got back to business. But the succession of Kennedy, which had begun with his death (with scant attention paid to it), turned out to be quite an extended process, for that death continued to jangle. Although the Kennedy myth was not likely to shape American consciences for generations, the impact of the figure of Kennedy on the decade succeeding his death was immense.

Kennedy's obvious and immediate successor was President Johnson. Lyndon Johnson succeeded to the presidency automatically upon the announcement of John Kennedy's death--even before he himself repeated the oath of office--and forthwith began to exercise significant leadership both in the assassination weekend itself and in his governmental duties. The speed with which Americans buried their old President and closed ranks around their new President astonished Europeans, who were accustomed to longer and choppier transitions.[1] As we noted, anxiety about succession at a factual level was minimal in the United States.[2] The idea that someone other than Johnson might succeed Kennedy--such as his son or slayers, as some Third World folks might have assumed[3]--never seems to have crossed the American mind. Although paranoid fantasies about Johnson having engineered a coup were entertained and dramatized in the play "MacBird," even widely held conspiracy theories functioned more to rationalize the assassination than to raise fears about a coup.[4] With over a century and a half of continuous government and nary a coup in its history, a record among democracies, Americans took Lyndon Johnson's succession for granted.[5]

Yet Americans took President Johnson's succession for granted, not only in the sense of having no doubt about it, but also in the sense of being preoccupied elsewhere. "The assassination blotted out nearly everything else," Manchester tells us, and, having acknowledged Johnson's induction into office, people moved on to other matters.[6] Though intertwined, the assassination and the succession were essentially two separate stories--with the assassination and its immediate sequels on center stage.[7] Although government was continuous, neither the end of the assassination weekend nor of the thirty-day official mourning period marked Johnson's full and legitimated succession to the presidency, which may not have been attainted until he was elected "in his own right" in 1964. The trauma of presidential murder coupled with the lack of psychological readiness for a new leader--which campaign, election, discussion of merits, and mobilization of partisans ordinarily provide--left people with a continuing sense of the loss of the old leader expressed through memorialization and the lack of wholehearted support for the new leader, drawing out the succession process as a psychological phenomenon. The search for "a philosophical explanation of the irony of the loss of a young, admired, and beloved leader" and "a reconciliation of this event with their ideals of justice and fairness," which, Schramm speculates, lay behind compulsive television viewing during the assassination weekend,[1] would continue to preoccupy the American people. Succession as the end of the re-organization process of mourning would not be complete until what happened had been assimilated into a coherent view of the world, feelings for the lost leader had been reduced, and feelings had been transferred to the new President.[2] Succession was accomplished through a return to normal routine, reaffirmation of meanings and institutions independent of Kennedy, Johnson's accession to the presidency in a spirit of continuity and posthumous obedience, and finally through Johnson's nomination and election in 1964--yet with a continuing undercurrent of unreconstructed loyalty to John Kennedy, expressed in holding back from Johnson and, finally, in Robert Kennedy's bid for the presidency in 1968.

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[1] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 7; Manchester, Death, pp. 361, 379.

[2] See Chapter VII, #2B.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 479.

[4] See Chapter VIII, #4.

[5] Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 939; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 52.

[6] Manchester, Death, p. 277.

[7] Ibid., p. 222.

I

The typical sequence of reactions to the Kennedy assassination, as we have outlined it, include a sense of shock (protest), brief and intense grief (disorganization), recovery from the loss (re-organization), remembering the dead Kennedy in a mythical light (memorialization), and transferring loyalty to a new Administration (succession).[1] Several commentators looked favorably on the swift completion of this process. Verba saw it as healthy that primordial commitments sank back and that "business as usual"--with all the pluralism and compromises that make our system work--returned so quickly.[2] Schramm, especially because of the normative implications of his systems model, saw the return to normal--often with a sense of rededication or moral obligation--as a good thing.[3] For some Wesleyan students, the regularity of the external universe reinforced the feeling that "in spite of this, life will go on;" said one, "I remember noticing over the . . . weekend that no matter who died the sun came out and the stars were there and everything material sort of went right on being and this sort of thing kept right on happening."[4] The return to work was itself reassuring. Seeing cargo being hauled among the ships with flags at half-mast, Dorothy Gilbert wonders:

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[1] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 23.

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 230, xviii; Pratt, "Patterns of Closure," p. 178.

> Is work as old as grief? Watching, I feel
> The slow and wounded groping of my senses
> Toward my old life. Here in my neighborhood,
> Under the flags lost among the ropes, the men
> Cry out, crates swing in the silence after,
> Under the watchful eyes the burden lands.
> All down the shore, the day changes and moves.[5]

But other poets see Kennedy betrayed in the resumption of business as usual in our commercial civilization, which is only intermittently pious or political in its predominant modernism.[1] Seeing the stock exchange being closed but for one day and then rallying enormously as the god of business resumes his reign, Harvey Shapiro images our commercial enterprise, typified by the National Cold Storage Company, as an insatiable modern Moloch devouring everything--"Grant's Tomb, the Civil War, Arlington, the young President dead, . . . ships, poems, stars, all the years of our lives."[2] While Oscar Mandel had seen profiting from memorializing Kennedy as a necessary evil, as his own grief went to market with others,[3] Marvin Solomon saw the commercial spirit as vapid and profane, as people immobilized by the Kennedy assassination merely glossed over the tragedy and returned to business:

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[1] See introduction to Chapter VII, above, and Appendix A, below.

[2] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 360.

[3] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 7, 20.

[4] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 196, and "College Students' Reactions," p. 233.

[5] Dorothy Gilbert, "At the Brooklyn Docks," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 27.

> "My God!"
> They thought, as all the shops blew dark,
> "When will it stop!" But stars' gunpowders splayed out
> Cycles from that fatal shot,
> Doors slammed, glass shattered
>
> At the shock. White and taut,
> In prairies of arc-light, they stood,
> Embracing packages of emptiness they bought.
> "But surely everything will be all right!"
>
> Next day the markets sold him--
> Body, pride, and aura--like a bargain day.[4]

Robert Sward also used commercial images as he portrayed going along with the succession as a leveling down to the mundane:

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[1] I have elsewhere (in an as-yet unpublished essay, "Three Types of Civil Religion--Archaic, Historic, and Modern) developed the concept of modern civil religion at greater length by spelling out the historical context in which it grew, drawing in part on Hannah Arendt's notion of the predominance of the "social question" (economic concerns) in the nineteenth century over the eighteenth century concern for public-spiritedness and on Max Weber's notion of the iron cage of capitalistic values surviving the demise of their religious basis in the Protestant ethic. For a recent statement of the predominance of economic interest over both civic virtue and religious conscience in modern America, see Robert Bellah, The Broken Covenant (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. xii.

[2] Harvey Shapiro, "National Cold Storage Company," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 40.

[3] Oscar Mandel, "We Who Do Not Grieve in Silence," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 103, quoted in full in Chapter VIII, #2, above.

[4] Marvin Solomon, "The Assassination," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 87.

Our seven children, my three wives
Wait for me. Already I am embracing them,
The snow upon me, pockets full of presents,
Certainty, groceries. I am, on the whole,
In step with the new Administration.[1]

Likewise, Jack Marshall saw something of hope but more of pretense in a white Christmas coming to cover over the nation's wound and its bleak future:

America stops turning over her conscience,
Halved these hundred years like Hamlet's,
And clutches her red flag's reopened wound
Running red through the bandages.
In a sky swept clean of cherry blossoms,
She seems to see a future drained
Of all color but black and white, alternatives.
White Christmas come,
The Union will twinkle
Like a child, her arms full of gifts,
Pretending all is well.[2]

In contrast to the typical pattern of adjustment to the succession which the commentators praise and the poets criticize, there were some who could not gloss over Kennedy's death, could not pretend all was well, could not get in step with the new Administration. "We have not recovered," wrote Manchester in the forward to his book, published in 1967.[3] And he was not alone. As we have noted, recovery was especially slow for Negroes--who continued to see the assassination as a manifestation of prejudice and hatred and a cause for fear seven weeks afterwards (while white negative perceptions and fear subsided)--and for college students who identified with Kennedy.[4] Carolyn Pratt, for instance, found that over half of her sample of Connecticut college students fell into the category of "non-closers" on the basis of their finding it hard to believe that Kennedy was really dead when interviewed in January as well as in November; non-closers also comprised three quarters of the 70% who continued to be upset when they thought of Kennedy and slightly more than half of the 50% who withheld confidence from President Johnson.[1] Wolfenstein also found persistent disbelief in essays written by junior high students in January. They hovered in the many intermediate stages between sheer disbelief and full acceptance; wrote one, "Even after two months, I still can't believe those events did happen, but we must believe them." Full mourning--in which "memories are painfully renounced, recollection is separated from hope, and the lost person is little by little given up"--also seemed to be beyond many of these children.[2] Although gratification that a new President was ready to replace the old one was more common, some of these young adolescents--as with a dead, idealized parent--refused to give Kennedy up, felt no one could compare with him (e.g., Ida: "No one will be respected as much"), rejected possible substitutes, and even felt some resentment toward Johnson as a usurper.[3]

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[1] Robert Sward, "Dec. '63," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 71.

[2] Jack Marshall, "Elegy for the New Year," in Of Poetry and Power, p. 33.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. xii.

[4] Coleman, "Changes in Belief," p. 267; see Chapter VII, #2A and #2D.

"I dare say we shall never see his likes again," said Cardinal Cushing in a eulogy,[4] and his sentiment was echoed even within the ranks of government. Kennedy's Cabinet and aides, whom President Johnson asked to continue on, soon divided into "loyalists," who could not go on without Kennedy, and "realists," who accepted the succession.[5] Like McNamara, who kept on, another Cabinet member also felt that Johnson lacked Kennedy's "sense of the time, the age, and the forces," as he and his colleagues assessed their new boss without completely accepting him.[6] Kennedy's aides, however, were the hardest hit. Schlesinger was plagued by intermittent disbelief and a sense of irreparable loss; O'Donnell, who was fanatically devoted to Kennedy and "would have died for him," lapsed into total withdrawal; Sorensen, who had been called Kennedy's alter ego, collapsed after he first called Johnson "Mr. President."[1] Each of them resigned his post, wrote a book memorializing and mythologizing Kennedy, and supported brother Robert's bid for power. "Mythologizing Kennedy into a static essence representing chiefly the potential, the unfulfilled" and making the hardly fair comparison between a dead hero and a living president, those who had made an "incalculable emotional investment in Kennedy"--including not only Kennedy's god-forsaken aides but also much of the Kennedy network around the nation--gave only half-hearted support to President Johnson and tended to become inattentive to politics, letting Vietnam escalation creep up and the radical movement burst in--until the prospect of a Kennedy restoration loomed.[2]

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[1] Pratt, "Patterns of Closure," pp. 180. 181, 188. Democrats and females were more likely to be non-closers. See Appendix B, below.

[2] Wolfenstein, "Death of Parent and President," pp. 84-85.

[3] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," pp. 22-23; Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 211; Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 231.

[4] Cushing, "Eulogy," p. 5.

[5] Manchester, Death, p. 165.

[6] Ibid., pp. 360-361; for McNamara's loss, see Chapter VII, #2D.

Especially in its political manifestation, the refusal to adjust to President Johnson's succession was archaic, reflecting an all-too-total devotion to Kennedy.[3] Although from a modern point of view there was little difference in substance between Johnson and Kennedy, Kimball tells us, the Kennedy loyalists shunned the realists and critized them for not perpetuating the archaic "myth that J.F.K. had been a super-President who could never be replaced" while they themselves archaically "continued to circle around the Kennedy family like planets around the sun."[4] On the other hand, the poets have a point in criticizing the modern commercialism which profaned Kennedy both in remembering (and selling) him and in forgetting him, and there is a hint, especially in Solomon's poem, apparent in its rejection, that being occasionally forced to stop may yet reveal the emptiness of the packages we carry. The modernistic assumption that favors a system's return to equilibrium (Schramm) or to interest-dominated politics (Verba) is at least questionable since, from an historic perspective, systems always need to be kept a bit off balance and to be reformed in the light of transcendent ideals and since basic commitments need to remain ingredients in everyday political compromises.[1] An historic perspective also sees value in disorganization (as does Wolfenstein; this stage is missing from Schramm's scheme)[2] and in recognizing rather than glossing over failure and tragedy.[3] Although one clergyman was just too "protestant" in advocating that "our mourning become something practical in our lives, so that it produces better and more Christ-like living,"[4] a couple of other ministers recognized grieving as worthwhile in itself. Contrary to popular belief, Charles Allen contended that "one never gets over a sorrow; sorrows become precious possessions of our hearts and lives."[5] William Sloane Coffin, Jr. likewise cautioned his listeners against premature resolution, holding that Jacqueline Kennedy, for example, was entitled to a period of God-forsakenness for a day or two before being advised to cast her anxieties on the Lord.[6] Advocating room for grief as well as loyalty, qualified as always, to the new administration provided an historic median.

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 566, 120, 469, 412.

[2] Lessard, "Is Camelot Dead?" p. 8.

[3] See Chapter I, #2. [4] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 46.

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[1] Functionalists and Marxists in sociology diverge at a similar point.

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. xix-xx; see Appendix A, below.

[3] The inability to deal with tragedy may be a factor in the holding back from succession of those preoccupied with it as well as those evading it.

[4] Terrence J. Finlay in That Day With God, p. 95.

[5] Charles L. Allen in That Day With God, p. 25.

[6] William Sloane Coffin, Jr., in That Day With God, pp. 97-98.

II

"The President has died. God save our nation," said Dean Rusk in announcing confirmation of Kennedy's death to his Cabinet colleagues.[1] Though not without a degree of upset (Rusk took a sedative for the first time since he had been in office), Rusk's response differs from many that we have seen--where grieving people sought to perpetuate Kennedy by identifying with him, incorporating him, dedicating themselves to his spirit and values, memorializing him--in taking Kennedy's death as a brute fact and moving on to invoke God's preservation of the nation. Likewise, many preachers took little note of Kennedy as they concentrated on a "most solemn reaffirmation of the reality of sheltering symbols" in response to the terror of presidential murder,[2] declaiming a God and an historic civil religion that operated at quite a different level from the Kennedy cult and was unshaken by his death. Persistent American values and institutions--quite independent of Kennedy--were also re-affirmed as the nation prepared to go on without him. Thus, although explanation, an understanding of the causes of the President's murder, remained unsatisfying,[3] valiant attempts were made to find meaning, some positive implication for the good; and re-assurance, a prediction that somehow or other the nation would come through without severe harm, seems to have been given quite convincingly as people dealt with the three problems of interpretation which they had to minimally resolve in order to integrate the Kennedy assassination into their ongoing lives in the process of succession.[4]

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 245, 358; they were flying over the Pacific.

[2] Berger, Social Construction, p. 96; see Chapter VII, #2A.

[3] See Chapter VIII, #4, above.

[4] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion and Recovery," p. 119.

The search for meaning was often pursued in a religious vein. Wrote Cardinal Cushing in a preface to a book of assassination weekend sermons:

> Millions . . . were turning with sure human instinct toward the Creator at a moment when their confidence in the stability of earthly things was shattered. Human explanations at this hour helped not at all; human comforts gave no consolation, so men turned to the one Power over which evil and violence could make no conquest--they sought peace in God.[1]

Yet the religious assertions proferred to fill the breach tended to be a consoling substitute for an explanation rather than an explanation. Unable to fathom Kennedy's sudden death, Everett Dirksen infused his eulogy with Shakespearean rhetoric: "Who shall say, save that there is a divinity that shapes our ends and marks our days?"[2] President Johnson said that though he wished he were not in his position, "the Almighty has willed differently."[3] However, when clergymen sought to explicate the will of God in relation to the assassination, they came up with a variety of interpretations, few of which spoke directly to the shattered beliefs in an ordered cosmos which the President's loss had occasioned.[4]

Some came up with a God as "senseless" as the assassination itself, a kind of _deus absonditus_. They made no attempt to explain why President Kennedy had been killed at that time and place,[5] declaring the meaning of the assassination to be beyond human comprehension as they invoked an incomprehensible but sovereign Lord. Cushing himself spoke of Kennedy's being summoned to eternal life in accord with the "inscrutable will of God." "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord," said William Sloane Coffin, Jr., in the words of an Old Testament benediction, and Joseph Munier used the New Testament variant, "Blessed are those who die in the Lord."[1] It seems the assassination was simply to be accepted. A providential answer was especially clear in George M. Docherty's sermon. Finding no sense in the assassin's shot (in contrast to the meaningful shots that began the American Revolution), Docherty "resolved" his quandary about the meaning of the assassination by appealing to a deus absconditus: "With reverence I can only answer, 'Only the Lord knows;' these matters lie inscrutably in the heart of the Providence of Almighty God." Yet moving on to seek, fumblingly, some light beyond this dark answer, Docherty cites not the "professional theologians" but the assassinated Lincoln's Second Inaugural, in which Lincoln affirms the civil war as scourge of a providential God, whose judgments are true and righteous altogether. "God still reigns," Docherty concludes; "we live 'under God'--under His grace and favor and under His judgment," a sentiment which is central to the historic stream of American civil religion, rooted in the Gettysburg Address, incorporated in the salute to the flag, and which was echoed by many of the preachers.[2] Yet there was a difference. While Lincoln had tied divine judgment to the sin of slavery, there was no specification of the sins which justified the assassination as a divine judgment if indeed it was one; there was no explication of the place of the assassination in the divine economy or even a labeling of the assassination as ultimately good or evil on this view. Other preachers, however, saw it as good, as a superable evil, or as open.

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[1] Richard Cardinal Cushing in _That Day With God_, p. vii.

[2] Everett Dirksen cited by U.P.I., _Four Days_, p. 131.

[3] Manchester, _Death_, p. 628. [4] See Chapter VII, #2E, above.

[5] See Chapter VII, #2E: the spokesmen for Heaven remained silent on the questions Auden had raised in his poem.

The simplest religious affirmation of the assassination as good was accomplished through a kind of denial. Similar to the popular notion that every dark cloud has a silver lining, Frederick Driftmier extols a God who does not leave his children alone, who has the power to make us what he wants, who has put something of himself in us which no tragedy can destroy, so that, in Ingersoll's lines, "in the night of death, hope sees a star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing."[1] Likewise, Norman Vincent Peale, the dean of postive thinking, denies that there is any real loss involved in the assassination, adding Whittier's words to his own:

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[1] Cushing, "Eulogy," p. 8; William Sloane Coffin, Jr. and Joseph Munier in That Day With God, pp. 101, 164.

[2] George Docherty in That Day With God, pp. 203-205; see also Ralph S. Barber and Orra G. Compton in That Day With God, pp. 121, 158.

> "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people"--this is the message of the Church of Almighty God to the people this day. Those whom we've lost are still with us. We long for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is stilled; but those whom we've loved and lost a while are still with us. These men who die in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ live on, and they shall be met again by their loved ones who mourn them. I think often of those wonderful words of Whittier:
>
> Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust,
> (Since He who knows our needs is just,)
> That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
> Alas for him who never sees
> The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
> Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
> Nor looks to see the breaking day
> Across the mournful marbles play
> Who hath not learned in hours of faith
> The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
> That Life is ever lord of Death
> And Love can never lose its own![2]

At the opposite end of the theological spectrum, at least one minister saw the assassination as a paradoxical good. Going beyond the providential view which simply acknowledged divine sovereignty over all events, Robert Nelson Bach saw the assassination as a direct expression of the divine will, as the strange work of love:

> It is the genius of the Judaeo-Christian tradition to hear the voice of God speaking through national tragedies as well as triumphs. We are chastened. "My dear children, . . . be not surprised," said Henry Ward Beecher, on another occasion, "certainly not out of your faith. God is not angry with you. . . . For your good God afflicts you; and he says

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[1] Frederick Driftmier in That Day With God, p. p. 43.

[2] Norman Vincent Peale in That Day With God, p. 77.

XUM

> to you, 'What father is he who chastiseth not his sons? Whom the Lord loveth he chastitheth.' O glorious fact! O blessed truth! These are God's love letters, written in dark ink."[1]

Still, unlike a kind human father, no reasons for chastisement are given.

Another group of clergy did not credit God with the assassination, which they saw as evil, but they stressed his ability to bring good out of it or to counterbalance it with good. "I believe that truly all things work together for good to those who love God," said F. Daniel Sladden, Jr., citing the familiar scripture, "and that God can bring forth good even out of such a great tragedy."[2] Despite the malevolent intentions of men who inflict it, "death is in God's hands," asserted John S. Kennedy, "and like everything else in and from His hands, it can only lead to good for those who love him and look to him."[3] "Out of the very tragedy," said Francis B. Sayre, Jr., "come fresh glimpses of the truth, . . . forgetfulness of ourselves and a plainer view of God and of his will for us."[4] According to Stanley Rabinowitz, preaching at a union Thanksgiving service (which President Johnson attended), we can be "grateful for evil," in Akiba's words, not by denying its reality or viciousness through any rationalization, but by seeing it as a blessing in disguise, a stimulus to action and a challenge to be overcome.[5] Already, in the rabbi's remarks, we can see a shading off of this view from an assurance of good consequences from divine hands toward an exhortation to moral action to offset the evil. Robert L. Edwards saw no redeeming features in evil but saw it as vincible with divine help; he asserted that God has the problem of evil in hand, so that evil can win battles but not the war, and he exhorts his congregation, in the words of the hymn, to stand up for Jesus who has overcome the world, trusting in his strength alone rather than in the frail arm of flesh.[1] Though it is the "apparent victor every once in a while, as when the President is shot," Dean Coburn wrote his son, "this power of evil does not have the last word;" rather, the last word belongs to the ethical virtues--love, decency, truth, honor, honesty, moderation, promise-keeping, and "giving your life for your country in time of war."[2] Here there is some assurance, but a kind of moralism, not entirely historic, has largely taken over.

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[1] Robert Nelson Bach in That Day With God, p. 114.

[2] F. Daniel Sladden, Jr. in That Day With God, p. 156.

[3] John S. Kennedy in That Day With God, p. 43.

[4] Francis B. Sayre, Jr., in That Day With God, p. 196.

[5] Stanley Rabinowitz in That Day With God, pp. 191-192.

Finally, another group of clergymen, partly overlapping the group above, see the question of good emerging from the assassination as an open one, depending, as Auden had asserted, on how we choose to respond to it.[3] Here the theology tends to be covenantal, placing primary emphasis on the promises of God as a source of good but stressing human cooperation as necessary to activate them. In contrast to an archaic view which sees America being "under God" because God is merely a sanctifying adjunct to a divinized state or a providential view which sees every nation being "under God" because the general sovereignty of God is stressed above the particular and variable dynamics of relationship to a covenant-making God, in the view of this last group our being "under God" is seen as conditional, a state to be sought rather than taken for granted. Ralph S. Barber sees God's blessing as depending on our commitment to the unitive purpose for which the nation was founded: "So long as we remain true to that purpose," he asserts, "God will bless us and strengthen us, and we will succeed, for we will surely be a nation under God."[1] While Richard M. Steiner prays God "to preserve this nation that it may live as an example to the nations on earth to find unity in diversity and peace among men," John S. Kennedy sees supposing ourselves to be God's country superior to other nations as a pretense while hate still stalks among us.[2] Recognizing that we are not truly what we espouse in the flag salute, F. Daniel Sladden exhorts, "May we at this time look to God and to each other and truly unite our hearts and minds and motives that we may truly be one nation under God with liberty and justice for all."[3] Recognizing how far we have sunk from our ideals, Samuel H. Miller prays:

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[1] Robert L. Edwards in That Day With God, p. 108.

[2] John B. Coburn in That Day With God, p. 211.

[3] See Chapter VII, #3C, above, for Auden's voluntarism.

> Dedicate us, both in spirit and in act, to live beyond the limit of our ease; that we may once again redeem the destiny of this nation and its high dreams from petty bickering and primitive prejudice.
>
> Unite us, O God, by thine own spirit that we may dedicate our lives again in high resolve upon the altar of a noble purpose that we may be a people under God, a blessing to the nations and to humanity of which we are a part.[4]

Here it is especially clear that being under God is not a "manifest destiny" but a destiny which must be continually redeemed through rededication, for which presidential assassination provides another occasion though Kennedy himself is not mentioned as a source of inspiration integral to the process. Combining divine assurance and human commitment in a way similar to St. Paul,[5] Orra G. Compton said, "We dedicate ourselves to the love of God and neighbor"--citing Jesus' commandment rather than Kennedy's values--"with the confident assurance that love will triumph over hatred and good will overcome evil." Compton saw being under God as a promised transcendent gift which our repentance and prayer would encourage God to grant us, and he admonished his people to humble themselves, to turn from their wicked ways, and to pray to become more nearly one nation under God if they expected God, as he promised, to forgive and heal them.[1] Drawing from the more national side of historic civil religion by quoting Lincoln and then "America," Richard L. Evans also sees our humility as prelude to divine protection:

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[1] Ralph S. Barber in That Day With God, p. 121.

[2] Richard M. Steiner and John S. Kennedy in That Day With God, pp. 153, 102; for a longer quotation on guilt and hate, see Chapter VII, #2E.

[3] F. Daniel Sladden, Jr. in That Day With God, p. 156.

[4] Samuel H. Miller in That Day With God, p. 39.

[5] St. Paul advises working out your own salvation because God is at work in you.

> "It behooves us then, to humble ourselves . . . and to pray for clemency and forgiveness. . . . All this being done in sincerity and truth . . . that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high:"
>
> Our Fathers' God, to thee,
>   Author of liberty,
> To thee we sing.
>   Long may our land be bright
> With freedom's holy light.
>   Protect us by thy might,
> Great God, our King![2]

Although ministers, as we might expect, engaged in great outpourings of religious language in an effort to give the assassination meaning--much of it tapping the vein of historic civil religion from both national and ecclesiastical sources--surveys indicate that very little dent was made. Half did not attend church or temple to hear the ministers' uplifting rhetoric, and half also could see no good emerging from the assassination.[3] While ministers, such as William F. O'Brien and Joseph D. Munier, straightforwardly asserted that "President Kennedy has not died in vain,"[4] others were not so sure. Those archaically attached to Kennedy were most reticent. Theodore Sorensen, who identified himself with a symbolically sparse Unitarian tradition, adamantly refused all religious explanation:

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[1] Orra G. Compton in That Day With God, pp. 157-158.

[2] Richard L. Evans in That Day With God, p. 45.

[3] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 164.

[4] William F. O'Brien and Joseph D. Munier in That Day With God, pp. 17, 164.

> An era had suddenly ended. The world had changed. Its brightest light was snuffed out by a senseless evil. No religion can rationalize his premature death. . . . John F. Kennedy was killed for no reason, and I deny the satisfaction of drawing a meaning or moral from his death.[1]

Kenneth O'Donnell, who came from a symbolically richer Roman Catholic faith, also had his doubts. The meaninglessness of Kennedy's death threatened the anchor of Ken's faith, Manchester tells us. "All my life," he said, "I have believed that something worthwhile comes out of everything, no matter how terrible it is. What good can come out of this?"[2] The church, as we have seen, was full of Pauline assurances that good would come out of evil, but it was not always convincing even to its adherents. At the Saturday mass in the White House, for instance, a man who whispered, "We have to accept it--it's God's way," heard back, "I can't accept it."[3] Even when it came to the standard formula of not dying "in vain," which archaic civil religion must affirm without question and which some proponents of historic civil religion also affirmed in a somewhat more paradoxical and measured fashion, Barber found division. While one kitchen helper was assertive--"Well, he did not die in vain"--a truck driver was more tentative--"I would like to think that his death was not in vain; I hope, certainly I hope it wasn't."[4]

Although many lacked certitude about the meaning of the assassination, there is considerable evidence of people predicting a good outcome, looking for a positive lesson in it, or rededicating themselves to a making a better world. Half the Topeka teenagers interviewed expected the world to improve--with peace and better feelings emergent--a response especially prevalent among "helpful" children who wished more to comfort than to avenge or to understand. One teenager, who herself wanted to be more patriotic

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[1] Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 846, 844.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 416. [3] Ibid., p. 463.

[4] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," pp. 112, 119.

and a better citizen, felt that we would join together even more as a nation as a result of the assassination.[1] A New Haven fireman said, "It will make people more patriotic and give them a better approach to the problems of the country. There won't be so much hate spoken and things like that. Maybe . . . it could be a good lesson."[2] Nationwide, three fourths of the National Opinion Research Center sample thought some kind of lesson had been learned--with 25 per cent specifying that there must be less hate and intolerance, 18 per cent actually predicting less hate and greater unity among Americans, and 9 per cent urging an end to complacency and the learning of greater humility; only 16 per cent saw the lesson negatively as the need for better security measures, and only 9 per cent advocated more patriotism and harsher treatment of subversives, again revealing a widespread aversion toward counteracting evil with evil and a preference for overcoming evil with good.[3] In Chicago, Christopher Hurn found that 40 per cent of his respondents felt that people like them--and 30 per cent felt that they themselves--should rededicate themselves to such things as improving their lives, promoting brotherhood, being more tolerant, becoming a better citizen, taking a more active interest in the affairs of government. Such a response was greater among those who were grief-stricken, among females, among those characterized by high status, high identification with Kennedy, and high political involvement, and by those who tended to blame a climate of hatred rather than a crackpot,[4] a segment of the population which I imagine overlaps considerably with the church-going public.

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[1] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-agers' Responses," pp. 10, 28, 2.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 125.

[3] Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 164, 172; see Chapter VII, #2E.

[4] Christopher Hurn and Mark Messer, "Grief and Rededication," in Kennedy Assassination, pp. 340-343, 346.

The fairly platitudinous and hortatory character of the various assurances, wishes, predictions, lessons, and attempts at rededication, whether to Kennedy's values or values independent of him, suggests that the Kennedy assassination produced no great surge of commitment in its wake. While surveyers failed to ask about civil-religious beliefs, they found that the tenacity with which people held their church-religious beliefs did not change significantly and that views on death, trustworthiness, and racial integration stayed constant, indicating, perhaps, a recovery of belief matching the doubts the assassination may have occasioned in some people but indicating no upsurge of faith as a result of it. "It is doubtful that the course of history has been altered in any significant way by the killing of John F. Kennedy," asserted Richard M. Steiner, and Christopher Hurn, likewise, saw the assassination as being assimilated into the mainstream of American history without long-term consequences, a tribute to the capacity of American society to re-integrate itself.[1] As with the quest for explanation of the causes of the assassination, the search for its meaning ended up with rather shadowy results for most people as they glossed over the assassination and went on with the business of living. Wolfenstein comments on the incompleteness of this process viewed as outdated:

> Following disasters generally there is a recurrent wish that out of evil good will come. The thought is expressed that grievous things happen for a purpose. The survivors resolve that they will hereafter strive to do better. Both adults and children expressed some positive expectations that we would become better, that our country would become better, as a consequence of the President's death. These ideas tended to be vague, without concrete content. We might see in them the positive counterpart to the conspiracy theories, which generally lacked any specification of what the plot was. In both these views, of plot and positive purpose, we see a striving to find a meaning, to integrate a disturbing event into an organized view of the world. That these efforts to find a larger meaning, for good or ill, remained incomplete suggests the obsolescence of teleological thinking in our time.[2]

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[1] Richard M. Steiner in That Day With God, p. 151; Hurn, "Grief and Rededication," p. 336.

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 230.

Although explanation and meaning remained problematic, reassurance was quickly and convincingly provided. Automatic succession reassured people not only about the presidency itself but also about the whole symbolic universe of values over which the President presided. From top to bottom, the operation of the various components of the American political and social system had an integrative effect and created confidence in the future not only because each functioned well under the test of a crisis situation but also because they interacted with and reinforced each other as they all focused to an unusual degree on the same events with similar ends in view.

The swift and smooth transfer of power to President Johnson was reassuring. "President Johnson's succession," wrote the authors of Four Days, "his immediate assumption of the burdens of office, even before the first dignitaries had paid their respects to the dead President, affirmed the order and stability of the republic."[1] Verba elaborates:

> The top and central institutions of the American government--those having to do with the transfer of power, the succession to high office, and the most crucial decisions of policy that affect our nation--executed a rapid and efficient formal transfer of presidential power. There was almost no time during which the locus of executive power was uncertain, no major period of jockeying for power, and, indeed, little change in personnel or policy direction.[2]

The intermediate institutions of American government and their leaders--intermediate between the presidency and the populace--also fully coöperated with and enhanced the succession. At the national level within the Executive Branch, Kennedy's aides and Cabinet officers, despite some private animosity toward Lyndon Johnson, put themselves immediately at the disposal of the new President.[3] The military were also prominent in the funereal ceremonies not only paying honor to the dead President but also showing deference to the new one. Within the Legislative Branch, majority party leaders of the Congress added what they could to enhance succession. House Speaker John McCormack, for instance, in his eulogy at the Capitol rotunda, asserted confidence that God--whom he took to be a supporter rather than a critic of America--would continue to provide us with good leaders in times of crisis:

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 52.

[2] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 350.

[3] Not everyone managed to keep a clear line between private feelings and public duties; for longer adjustment to Johnson as President, see #4.

> Any citizen of our beloved country who looks back over its history cannot fail to see that we have been blessed with God's favor beyond most other peoples. At each great crisis of our history we have found a leader able to grasp the helm of state and guide the country through the troubles which beset it. In our earliest days, when our strength and wealth were so limited and our problems so great, Washington and Jefferson appeared to lead our people. Two generations later, when our country was torn in two by fratricidal war; Abraham Lincoln appeared from the mass of the people as a leader able to reunite the nation.
>
> In more recent times, in the critical days of the depression and the great war forced upon us by fascist aggression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, later Harry S. Truman appeared on the scene to reorganize the country and lead its revived citizens to victory. Finally, only recently, when the cold war was building up the supreme crisis of a threatened nuclear war capable of destroying everything--and everybody--that our predecessors had so carefully built, and which a liberty-loving world wanted, once again a strong and courageous man appeared ready to lead us.
>
> No country need despair so long as God, in His infinite goodness, continues to provide the nation with leaders able to guide it through the successive crises which seem to be the inevitable fate of any great nation.[1]

Leaders of the loyal opposition party were also vocal in their praise of the fallen President and in support of the new one; reactions to the assassination showed few sharp differences between adherents of the two major parties; and partisanship declined following the assassination.[2] Within the Judicial Branch, Supreme Court justices also extolled the God-given unitive values of which they were partial guarantors. Justice Arthur Goldberg, for instance, in calling people to rededicate themselves to freedom, justice, order, and peace, spoke of the "inalienable right of a man, as a child of God, to have human dignity" as a "cardinal principle of our democracy derived from biblical teachings."[1] Judges and political leaders at state and local levels also expressed their condolences, led ceremonies, and urged rededication. In Dallas, for instance, Mayor Cabell, "in prophetic style"--according to Levi Olan who repeated it in his sermon--called upon the people of the city to strengthen their moral fibre and to make Dallas a community of tolerance and understanding.[2] Thus, concludes Verba, "The intermediate institutions of the American political process--all levels of government, national, state, and local; various branches of government, military and civilian; and many non-governmental institutions, notably the American political parties--demonstrated their commitment to the norms of the democratic system."[3] In contrast to succession crises elsewhere, the continued loyal functioning of these intermediary political institutions seems to have been assumed. Writes Verba:

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 130. [2] See #4, below.

> It is not so much that the American military did not attempt to take control of the government; it is that no one even thought to ask where the military's support lay. And though there were many who suspected that a conspiracy lay behind the assassination, it was thought of as a low-level or external conspiracy--that is, few considered it a conspiracy generated within the American government in an attempt to change leadership or the direction of policy. . . . At no time does it appear that anyone at any level of the society asked whether the institutions specified in the Constitution should or would operate. . . . The validity of the central institutional structure seems to have been taken for granted (and to have been rendered more effective by the faith that people invested in it).[4]

Among non-political intermediary insttitutions, business, churches, and mass media also played integrative roles. Both by slowing down or stopping over the assassination weekend and by resuming quickly, business harmonized with the national mood and encouraged the succession process.

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[1] Arthur Goldberg in That Day With God, pp. 206, 208.

[2] Mayor Cabell cited by Levi Olan in That Day With God, p. 18.

[3] Verba, "Political Commitment," pp. 350, 358. [4] Ibid., pp. 351, 358.

Religious institutions also played an integrative role, making their own contributions within or paralleling the state funeral, not preaching their own Gospels as much as extolling America's civil religion,[1] praying, in effect, that "God would mend her every flaw, confirm her soul in self-control, her liberty in law," expressing fundamental confidence in America's way of life and praying for her future under a new President. Several preachers gave particular sanction to the succession process, citing Biblical, medieval, and American precedents. "God buries his workmen, but he carries on his work," said Charles L. Allen, seeing Johnson completing Kennedy's work as Solomon had completed the temple David had intended to build and equating God's agenda with our own.[2] Francis B. Sayre, Jr., saw the mantle pass from Kennedy to Johnson (and to ourselves) as it had passed from Elijah to Elisha, and he bid his people to have faith that "by the healing power of God, we shall pass safely to the other side."[3] Robert L. Edwards revived the medieval custom of announcing royal death and succession together, a practice once designed to stem anxiety at the loss of a sacred king but considered appropriate also for a nation "under God:"

> The transition brings to mind the custom begun by the French in the late Middle Ages. "The King is dead," they said. Then with equal emphasis they also cried out, "Long live the King!"
>
> Now it is for us to take up a like refrain. "The President is dead." For the moment, no doubt for months to come, this is what will seem most real. Yet more and more, even in the midst of sorrow, we must raise another voice: "Long live the President! And long live this nation, and this country among the nations, under God!"[4]

Drawing on American experience of succession, Norman Vincent Peale and Senate chaplain Frederick Brown Harris repeated General Garfield's words to an anarchic people after Lincoln's death, "God reigns, and the government in Washington still lives."[1] In that period of "awful uncertainty," God raised up "a guide for the nation's destiny,. . . . an adroit little politician named Johnson--Andrew Johnson," said Sayre, who stood in "Lincoln!s staunch shoes" and revealed, through God's grace, his own hidden mettle with which to meet the challenge.[2] In addition to affirming presidential succession, several preachers also reaffirmed democratic values. While some were content merely to extol American democracy as government of the people, by the people, and for the people,[3] William H. Dickinson affirmed a whole list of tenets of the democratic credo as centered symbolically in the presidency:

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[1] See Chapter VII, #3A, above, for church contributions to unification.

[2] Charles L. Allen in That Day With God, pp. 27, 28.

[3] Francis B. Sayre, Jr. in That Day With God, p. 198.

[4] Robert L. Edwards in That Day With God, pp. 110-111.

> There are many symbols of our national life, rich and full of meaning: the flag, the national anthem, the Grave of the Unknown Soldier, the memorials of Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln, but none of these even approach the meaning and significance of the symbol of the office of the President. Here is centered our belief in representative government, our belief in the right of the people to choose leaders who are entrusted with awesome responsibilities, our belief in the ordered foundation of freedom and of a society governed by law and order, and our belief in the very concept of democracy as a way of life.[4]

Also among intermediary social institutions, mass media had a special role in building confidence and in uniting the nation. The mass media were reliable, were believed to be objective, and linked the nation together by communicating shared emotion, so that individuals whose emotions were aroused were made clearly aware of the emotions of their fellow Americans.[5]

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[1] Norman Vincent Peale in That Day With God, p. 77; Frederick Brown Harris cited by A.P., The Torch Is Passed, p. 20.

[2] Frances B. Sayre, Jr. in That Day With God, p. 197.

[3] Marshall H. Strickland and Orra G. Compton in That Day With God, pp. 181, 157.

[4] William H. Dickinson in That Day With God, p. 8.

[5] Verba, "Political Commitment," pp. 355, 358.

As media of communication, the mass media brought home to people the smooth succession that had taken place in the wake of President Kennedy's death and inspired a sense of continuity and confidence:

> Americans trusted their free press and their free broadcast media . . . and they demonstrated to them that the Presidential succession was working smoothly, that government was going forward in firm hands, helping to reduce fears and recriminations. . . . The very fullness of the news won confidence in it, and developments cut the ground from under any belief that a nationally dangerous conspiracy was involved.[1]
>
> Television held this nation together for four days, keeping people informed by a steady flow of news, showing them vividly that President Johnson had taken command of the situation and that the transfer of power had taken place smoothly.[2]
>
> Rapid recovery, the sense of continuity and confidence that rapidly reasserted itself, can be largely attributed to the networks' decision to broadcast nothing but programs related to the President's death.[3]

This television fare also reinforced American commitments, values, and hopes:

> Television served as a catalyst to speed up adjustment to the finality of the President's death and to renew faith in the future . . . . and it gave reassurance by showing the existence and continuity of cherished institutions and values, including faith in the future of the country and belief in the form and continuity of government, which are cornerstones of the American value system.[4]
>
> Watching and hearing national leaders, being reminded of national history and the rituals and laws of the national government, reviewing the career of the dead President, seeing the norms and mores of American life exemplified for them by people they admired reassured people that the nation, and in particular the presidency, was continuing as they wanted it to and reminded them of the pattern of conduct expected of them as Americans. . . . The focus on the presidency reasserted America's deep commitment to that institution and to the rule of law and order.[5]

Finally, at the base of society, primordial commitments to the nation and to the presidency as its chief symbol as well as continuing faith in the rule of law and order were expressed within primary groups of family or friends and associates and in individual hearts.[1] Barber found, for example, that when the ideas arose in group discussions to shortcut regular justice, to make Oswald "suffer royal," or to go witchhunting for extremist groups, they were countered with "invocations of democratic ideology," such as:

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[1] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 22, 24.

[2] Elmer W. Lower, "A Television Network Gathers the News," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 72.

[3] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 113.

[4] Mindak, "Television's Functions," pp. 139, 136.

[5] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 23, 24.

> Justice should be dealt out to him by law. He should get a fair trial.
>
> This is America. We don't do that (torure people) here.
>
> Everybody's an individual in their own rights. Otherwise, it wouldn't be a democracy, it is a free country.[2]

Solitude was also productive of increased commitment; indeed, Hurn found that personal rededication was 10 per cent higher among those who wanted to be alone rather than with family or others.[3]

Thus from top to bottom, from the new President to the solitary individual and through all the intermediate political, social, and primary institutions and groups, reassurance was generated based on the smooth functioning of all these elements integrated together under crisis conditions and enhanced by the "re-presentation" of the norms on which America is built (which constitute "society" as the "object" of religion in Durkheim's scheme) in an intense emotional atmosphere. "The assassination crisis," writes Verba, "is probably the nearest equivalent in a large modern nation-state of the kind of intense mutual rededication ceremony that is possible in a smaller and simpler society."[4] This kind of archaic--indeed primitive--social reaffirmation of common sentiments was not the only kind of moral remaking, as Hurn points out, but it was the basic and predominant kind. Individual conscience is indeed a post-primitive possibility and may be best developed in solitude, as Hurn's figures suggest, but it is difficult to see it, especially under the peculiar circumstances of the assassination weekend, as other than a personal elaboration and appropriation of more basic common moral sentiments which bombarded one from all angles at that time. At any rate, it is clear that individual rededication was a minority phenomenon, as Hurn's findings attest; yet it is also clear that the shadowy character of this and other sources of meaning did not prevent most Americans, perhaps at a less conscious and more social level, from receiving strong reassurance encouraging them to go on with their lives, to go on with a new President, and to go on believing in America, even as a continuing example to other nations. At least one television commentator quoted Longfellow's immortal lines:

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[1] Verba, "Political Commitment," pp. 355, 350, 359.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," pp. 125-126.

[3] Hurn, "Grief and Rededication," p. 346.

[4] Verba, "Political Commitment," p. 354.

> Sail on, sail on, O ship of state,
> Sail on, O Union strong and great.
> Humanity with all its fears,
> With all the hopes of future years,
> Is hanging breathless on thy fate.[1]

Of the three types of interpretation, reassurance seems clearly to have been most convincingly used to aid succession following Kennedy's death. As with explanation through conspiracy theories, which tended to function more as reassurance than as serious belief,[2] reassurance of continuing life, presidency, and nationhood was predominantly archaic, especially if Verba's analogy of the assassination weekend to primitive Australian rededication ceremonies holds. The complete integration of the entire American political and social system was unusually archaic but quite temporary as competing historic values and modern interests reasserted themselves after the weekend.

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 67.

[2] See Chapter VIII, #4.

XUM

Simple affirmation without criticism or detachment of America's deep commitment to the presidency and to the rule of law and order, of faith in the future of the country and belief in the form and continuity of government, of presidential succession as God-ordained and of America as specially blessed and exemplary was also archaic. Yet the norms which were simply affirmed as tradition often continued to bear the marks of a more historic birth. Even in Speaker McCormack's largely archaic remarks there is the barest hint of the historic belief that a covenanting God might choose, in his infinite goodness, not to provide us with good leaders. The basis for belief in law and order--whether archaic belief in its sanctity or historic belief in its conditional validity or modern belief in its indispensability--was hardly specified, but clearly it was used to counter a more primitive resort to vengeance. In these days of unification when a clearly differentiated position might have appeared divisive, it was rarely clear whether much-touted American "freedom" meant a modern freedom to pursue one's interests economically and politically, served as an archaic code word for the actual American way of life plus other nations allied with us regardless of their political system (the Free World), or was an historic God-given right, but in Justice Goldberg's remarks, at least, it seems clear that freedom and dignity served as transcendent ideals by which present-day America might judge itself in light of its historic national and ecclesiastical heritage. Reassurance is easier, however, without the spectre of judgment, and it was largely accomplished by an affirmation of America as continuous with an unscrutinized tradition in an archaic vein and supplemented by a modernism which, uninterested in ideology, was heartened merely by the continuing efficient functioning of the American system.

In contrast to explanation and reassurance, meaning was most often sought in an historic vein but the results were disappointing. Some felt little need to fathom the meaning of the assassination. For those archaically devoted to Kennedy, there was no consolation; for those archaically devoted to America, there was no need for consolation since a new sacred king was already in place to guarantee the good which is always ours; for modernists, the whole idea of consolation and deeper meanings had long since been dismissed as mystification while everyday regularities, largely undisturbed by Kennedy's death (even spurred by the stock market rally), were viewed as providing sufficient coherence to life. Still, the historic search for meaning seems to have been more rife at the time of the assassination than at most times, even among some not usually inclined to engage in it. Yet the answers which people came up with or that their preachers gave them were often vague or unconvincing. The providential "explanation" was quite clear but most unsatisfying. Making God the cause of everything--even with the usual qualifications--threatens his goodness. Although a predestinarian providential view, based on a deus absconditus, provides, according to Weber, one of the three "rationally satisfactory answers to the question . . . of the incongruity between destiny and merit," it is hardly morally satisfying, for the rational consistency of this view "dehumanizes" God's goodness, making it utterly beyond human comprehension. "Man's acknowledged incapacity to scrutinize the ways of God means that he renounces in loveless clarity man's accessibility to any meaning of the world," Weber concludes about this view.[1] It is instructive that George Docherty, the chief proponent of this view among the assassination weekend preachers, soon moderates it, turning not from less useful to more useful professional theologians (Leslie Dewart's revised view of omnipotence might have helped him, for example) but to Lincoln's Second Inaugural for a more comprehensible providential view; yet even here Docherty merely evinces the idea of judgment--as Robert Nelson

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[1] Weber, From Max Weber, pp. 275, 358.

Bach evinces the notion of fatherly chastisements--without relating it meaningfully to the particular figures and forces involved in the Kennedy assassination. In the end, Docherty reverts to a more archaic affirmation of the persistence of Kennedy's values as the nation rises again to fulfill his dreams as the reason why the assassination is not the devil's laugh of victory over the Providence of God.[1] The sentimental and paradoxical denials of the assassination as evil and the call to meet it armed with consoling platitudes or vapid moralism seem equally unsatisfying; surely some view is needed which takes the assassination seriously as a shattering and tragic experience. Among the assassination weekend preachers, those informed by a covenantal theology who sought to make good on the assassination by seeking the particular will of God in humility, repentance, and prayer strike me as giving the most satisfying historic answer though one still vague on the meaning of the assassination itself. If one is not merely to concede, with Wolfenstein, the obsolesence of "teleological thinking" in our time--which is a valid conclusion as to where the question of meaning largely ended up in the assassination weekend--it will be necessary to develop the kind of theological thinking, prefigured in the Bible, which knows a God who lives as a transcendent force within human history and which knows how to find meaning in the tragedies of history.[2]

III

While the presidency was quickly reaffirmed in dedication to American values for which it serves as a cornerstone, adherence to the new President, Lyndon Johnson, could not be so immediately produced. Leaving aside those who refused to go along with Johnson's succession, it took some time for most Americans to make the transition from one President to the next, if not at the instrumental level, at least psychologically. The Presidential death eclipsed the accession of the new President. Greenstein, for instance, found that among Wesleyan students "the central objects of concern and preoccupation were, of course, the late President, but also, to a striking degree, Mrs. Kennedy, and to a lesser degree, President Johnson."[1] While the story of the succession begins with the assassination itself--which automatically made Johnson President--it only gradually gained salience and did not become the main story until after the funeral.[2]

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[1] George Docherty in That Day With God, p. 205; cf. Chapter VII, #3C.

[2] For a hint of a more historically rooted theology, see Introduction, #1.

Although "immediately aware" of his new responsibilities, even for Lyndon Johnson himself, the "full realization," the "subjective identification" of himself as President "came gradually."[3] Right after the assassination, Johnson was in something of a daze, relying for about an hour mainly on his Secret Service agents, some of whom also had difficulty making the immediate transfer of their services from the dead President to the living one. Feebly, Johnson said to an associate, "This is a time for prayer if there ever was one."[4] Above the shock and grief which pre-occupied them at Parkland Hospital, the need to take the oath of office and to leave safely for Washington were uppermost in the minds of the President and his advisors.

The press was also concerned with the oath. The first question asked by newsmen after President Kennedy's death was formally anounced was whether Johnson had taken the oath of office. Although the succession of the Vice President to the presidency was automatic, beginning perhaps as soon as Kennedy was incapacitated (in Eisenhower's opinion), and did not technically require the repetition of the oath Johnson had given on Inauguration Day to uphold the Constitution, historical precedent and psychological need required ceremony. In the popular mind, including the opinion of newsmen (who should have known better), the presidency was vacant until Lyndon Johnson swore to "faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States." Especially since the Constitution itself is not clear as to whether the powers of the presidency or the office itself devolves upon the Vice President,[1] especially since Johnson had not been elected to the presidency by the people, especially since the death of the previous President had been so abrupt and the need to demonstrate the stability of the American system of government both to the nation "stunned and shaken to its very heart" and to the world at large was so compelling--taking the oath of office was felt to be necessary to legitimate Johnson's ascension to the presidency.[2] As even the terms indicate which journalists used to desribe the ceremony--"reannointing, investiture, installation"--taking the oath of office involved a transfer of charismatic and traditional authority undergirding the legal authority which had already technically been transferred.[3] Johnson felt the need to take the oath as soon as possible and arranged for its administration on the airplane at Love Field outside Dallas before he took off for Washington. Judge Sarah Hughes administered the oath, adding to the Constitutionally prescribed text the words "So help me God," which Johnson repeated. Like the Bible, on which Johnson swore the oath (though it is also customary rather than Constitutionally prescribed),[1] these final words indicated, as Kennedy had made explicit in the opening of his Inaugural Address, that the oath was being sworn before God, looked upon not only as a source of legitimacy but also as a source of guidance. President Johnson stood between his wife and Mrs. Kennedy for the taking of the oath, and the picture of that event was quickly relayed to publicize his having taken charge. Though painful for her, both President Johnson and Mrs. Kennedy thought her presence in that picture to be desirable to symbolize the continuity of administrations, perhaps even to bolster presidential authority and lend a semblance of majesty.[2] Yet, in a sense, Mrs. Kennedy upstaged President Johnson even in that picture, for the public focused its attention on the "classic pain-torn profile" of Mrs. Kennedy still clad in the bloodstained suit. Acknowledging Johnson's induction into office, perhaps with some reassurance, the public very soon resumed its preoccupation with mourning for Kennedy, which Mrs. Kennedy epitomized. "The power of government had passed to Lyndon Johnson," wrote Manchester, "but Mrs. John F. Kennedy possessed a far greater power over men's hearts."[3]

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[1] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 196.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 222. [3] Ibid., p. 227. [4] Ibid., pp. 165, 232.

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 225. The antecedent to "same" in Article II, #1:5 is unclear; the Founders intended the Vice President to be acting President.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 224-227, 318; Lyndon Baines Johnson, The Vantage Point (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), p. 12.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 268; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 333; for the relation of inauguration to authority, see the introduction to Chapter II.

If the public had some difficulty in switching loyalty from Kennedy to Johnson, Kennedy's own staff, as Manchester had reported in sordid detail, had much greater difficulty. While Johnson had at first decided not to make any major moves without the approval of Kennedy's staff, not wanting to seem presumptuous, he increasingly became his own man and, as President, had authority over them.[4] "O God, they're taking over already,"

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 226, 324, 326; U.P.I., Four Days, p. 35. Sarah Hughes thought that Kennedy's personal Bible, which she had been given, was a "Catholic Bible," but she decided it would be all right anyway.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 319, 322. [3] Ibid., p. 277; see Chapter VIII, #3.

[4] Manchester, Death, pp. 223, 313; Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 9.

XUM

exclaimed Evelyn Lincoln when she heard President Johnson's secretary paged on the Parkland Hospital loudspeaker.[1] Forms of deference, such as rising when President Johnson entered the stateroom on the airplane and calling him "Mr. President," were generally observed, themselves confirmation of his new status and reminders of the wall which separated him even from his friends, a wall which Johnson saw inherent in the office of the Presidency.[2] "There had closed about Lyndon Johnson," writes Tom Wicker, "that terrible loneliness to which all Presidents have testified: that loneliness born of the reluctance of ordinary men to believe that the President, too, is human and one of them."[3] Occasionally, however, there were affronts to the new President, such as Pilot Swindal's refusal to be in the oath-taking picture--explaining, "I didn't belong to the Lyndon Johnson team. My President was in that box"--and, even more flagrant, Godfrey McHugh's statement, "I have only one President, and he's lying back in that cabin."[4] Other Kennedy staffers remained respectful but aloof, staying as much as possible with Mrs. Kennedy and the body in the tail compartment and avoiding contact with the Johnson men on the plane trip to Washington.[5] Two misunderstandings exacerbated the situation. Both the Kennedy and Johnson parties were on the same airplane, the Presidential jet, when, perhaps, each had expected the other party to be on the back-up (Vice-Presidential) airplane, and the Kennedy people resented having to wait on that same airplane for Johnson's oath-taking ceremony when it could have been performed in flight or later or on the other airplane. In the first misunderstanding, O'Donnell and Johnson did not communicate clearly; in the second, Robert Kennedy had given

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 240.

[2] Johnson, Vantage Point, pp. 11, 13; Johnson was startled when first called "Mr. President." Schlesinger denies that loneliness is inherent in the presidency and pleads that "awesome" be banished; Imperial Presidency, p. 214.

[3] Tom Wicker, JFK and LBJ (New York: Morrow, 1968), p. 195.

[4] Manchester, Death, pp. 321, 326. [5] Ibid., p. 343.

XUM

Johnson legal counsel as his Attorney General about procedure for oath-taking without disclosing clearly his preference for its timing or locale.[1] Even logistics on the plane were difficult: Mrs. Kennedy entered the presidential bedroom while President Johnson was reclining there (it became temporarily a no-man's land and then hers), and those who wished to pay respects to the dead President had to file past President Johnson in his presidential office to join the mourners in the cramped tail. The friction was, at base, trivial and hardly deserved the full airing that Manchester gave it in his spinning out of the Kennedy saga, yet it is symbolic of the tension between two legitimate needs: the need for prolonged mourning and the need for immediate succession. And the difficulty in switching loyalty from a man who was just President to President Johnson took on added significance because the new President, at first, very much wanted to keep the Kennedy team intact as his own staff, to maintain continuity, to retain what he called the "aura of Kennedy," telling Kennedy aides even on the plane trip (which seemed premature to some) that he needed them even more than Kennedy had and discouraging any resignations.[2] Yet, as was evident on the plane trip and increasingly later, Johnson never did quite command the loyalty of some of the Kennedy people.

When the plane carrying the two Presidents arrived at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, first to debark was the dead President and his entourage, including Robert Kennedy, who had vaulted unseen up the front entrance, brushed past President Johnson without greeting him, and left with Jacqueline from the rear hatch with the coffin. White explains:

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 235, 268-272, 312-315; White, Making President 1964, p. 19; Johnson, Vantage Point, pp. 11, 13. The Associated Press saw those closest to the fallen President as remiss in overlooking the full implications of the automatic transfer of presidential power; Johnson needed to occupy the presidential sanctum with its communications instruments allowing him to take quick, firm charge; Torch Is Passed, p. 22.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 482, 319; Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 15.

> As the cursed plane approached Washington bearing the body of John F. Kennedy, Johnson had felt that he must, in order to establish continuity, accompany the casket from the plane to the ground in the cargo lift with the family and the blood-stained widow, in the view of the nation. Robert F. Kennedy had felt otherwise--that this was a moment of private grief and that the use of the moment for political purpose was totally unfitting. He had countermanded Johnson, the President. The body of Kennedy and the family had come first from the plane, in grief before the eyes of the nation. Then, moments later, the new President, himself tortured by the occasion, had come down alone from the plane.[1]

Johnson felt slighted by coming off second, but, in his desire to maintain harmony and continuity with the haloed Kennedy, he refrained from making a public issue of it though the matter rankled on both sides.[2] A Cabinet member wrote of Johnson's feelings, which were disclosed to him in private:

> He said that when the plane came in, they paid no attention to him whatsoever, that they took the body off the plane, put it in the car, took Mrs. Kennedy along and departed, and only then did he leave the plane without any attention directed or any courtesy toward him, then the President of the United States. But he said he just turned the other cheek. He said, what can I do, I do not want to get into a fight with the family and the aura of Kennedy is important to all of us.[3]

"Only after the ambulance was gone," wrote the authors of Four Days, "did the new President step to center stage."[4] Even then, the focus of Johnson's first televised public statement as President centered on the loss of Kennedy though it ended with a pledge to do his best with the help of God and the people. Having prayed silently that he should not prove unworthy, President Johnson said:

> This is a sad time for all people. We have suffered a loss that cannot be weighed. For me it is a deep personal tragedy. I know the world shares the sorrow that Mrs. Kennedy and her family bear. I will do my best. That is all I can do. I ask for your help--and God's.[5]

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 312.

[2] Ibid.: such incidents contributed to Kennedy-Johnson political rivalry. Johnson denied being aware of friction; Vantage Point, p. 16.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 387.

[4] U.P.I. Four Days, p. 37.

[5] Ibid.

Having been greeted before his statement by several Congressional, Cabinet, and judicial leaders--though some such as Goldberg hung back (because "he was not there for that, having come to pay respects to the body")--President Johnson afterwards boarded a helicopter with his wife, McNamara, Ball, Bundy, and others. En route to the White House, Johnson stressed again his continuity of administrations theme in terms of personnel to Ball:

> Kennedy did something I couldn't have done. He gathered around him the ablest people I've ever seen--not his friends, not even the best in public service but the best anywhere. I want you to stay. I need you. I want you to stand with me.[1]

Arriving at the White House with no one watching him disembark--in what was "without doubt the most painful assumption of power in American history"--Johnson walked through the White House and over to his Vice-Presidential office in the Executive Office Building, thinking it would be "presumptuous of me" to use Kennedy's Oval Office though some of his staff recommended it.[2]

President Johnson began work Saturday morning by issuing a proclamation setting Monday aside as a day of mourning.[3] Dated officially in the year of the Independence of the United States as well as in the year of Our Lord--or as The Torch Is Passed would have it, "November 22, 1963, the 188th year of the American dream, the 1037th day of the New Frontier"[4]--the proclamation also extolled Kennedy as a man of energy, courage, wisdom, strength, and peace, who "upheld the faith of our fathers, which is freedom for all men" and worked for growing liberty and order. In a time of outrage and grief, the proclamation called for the carrying on of Kennedy's sacred mission in keeping with the late President's spirit and word:

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 401, 402. [2] Ibid., p. 403.

[3] For this portion of the text, see Chapter VII, #3A, above.

[4] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 22; see introduction to Chapter V.

> As he did not shrink from his responsibilities, but welcomed them, so he would not have us shrink from carrying on his work beyond this hour of national tragedy.
>
> He said it himself: "The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it--and the glow from that fire can truly light the world."[1]

Though he did not take over the Oval Office due to Robert Kennedy's reticence to have him do so, President Johnson had Mrs. Lincoln clear out of her adjoining office, and she saw to it that President Kennedy's belongings--including his famous rocking chair--were removed from the Oval Office.[2] Seeing that the need to encourage confidence in government--which his assuming the Oval Office would symbolize--was in conflict with the nation's dominant mood of grief--which still saw the White House as Kennedy's and might resent his taking over there--President Johnson stressed the alternative of being seen doing his job properly as the best way to inspire confidence, and he put off his speech to a Joint Session of Congress from Tuesday to Wednesday at Robert Kennedy's request since "the need for government to proceed was at odds with the Kennedys' grief."[3] Even for Johnson himself, "those days were marked by a strange counterpoint" between feelings of grief and responsibility for the work to go on, between the "measured cadence" of ceremonial functions and the "frenzied pace" of government meetings.[4] Meetings began for Johnson on that Saturday "even before paying respects to Mr. Kennedy" and continued, in counterpoint, throughout the day. He conferred with Cabinet members (including Secretary Rusk at 9:20 A.M.), received the good wishes of Congressional leaders, and spoke with President Truman at the Executive Office Building; then he led these and other dignitaries past Kennedy's coffin in the White House at 11:00 (spending a half hour in silent prayer before the casket with Eisenhower, according to The Torch Is Passed);[1] then he conferred with President Eisenhower in his Executive Office Building Office from 11:30 to 1:30; then he went with Lady Bird to a memorial service for Kennedy at St. John's Episcopal Church at 1:30; then he chaired a Cabinet meeting at 2:30 in the Cabinet Room of the White House.

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[1] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 53.

[2] Manchester, Death, pp. 453-455; White, Making President 1964, p. 26.

[3] Manchester, Death, pp. 478-481.

[4] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 33.

The Congressional leaders pledged their support to the new President with Minority Leader Everett Dirksen saying, "We'll work together for our country. God bless you, Mr. President," and the rest of the delegation echoing, "God bless you, sir."[2] President Truman also gave Johnson support and advice as well, stressing the role of the President, towering over partisan controversy and partisan polls, as the voice of all the people, whose duty was to lead the people and champion their causes.[3] Loyalty and support were also pledged by two Republican former Presidents, the ailing Herbert Hoover as well as Eisenhower, whose two-hour meeting with Johnson was not only a valuable sharing of experience but also a symbolic legitimizing initiation of a new entry into the elite circle of Presidents.[4] The Cabinet meeting began with Rusk's announcemnt "Gentlemen, the President of the United States," the rising of all the Secretaries, and a silent prayer initiated by the new President. During Johnson's subsequent remarks (and destroying their effect in his opinion), Robert Kennedy walked into the Cabinet meeting and was greeted by several Secretaries leaping to their feet while Johnson and others remained seated, one more point of embittering friction.[1] The Cabinet meeting concluded with testimonies to Johnson by Dean Rusk and Adlai Stevenson, who wanted it to be known that they "intended to keep faith with this administration." "There can only be a moment's pause in the nation's business," said Stevenson to Johnson; "your unique qualities of character, wisdom and experience are a blessing to our country in this critical hour, and our confidence in your leadership is total."[2]

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[1] A.P., Torch Is Passed, p. 40 (otherwise from Manchester).

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 473.

[3] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 31.

[4] Ibid.

Despite the bravado, nothing of substance was accomplished at the Cabinet meeting and little of spirit. Cabinet members, who "couldn't forget that the corpse of the man who had appointed them all rested in a wooden coffin on the other side of the same building," found Johnson's meek manner--almost as if he were still the subordinate they were accustomed to in that setting--uninspiring and the meeting itself "drab, awful, highly unsatisfactory."[3] Yet Johnson had been hoping by this and other meetings to inspire confidence, to build a consensus, to earn loyalty and support, to prove himself, to confirm the charisma ("attract a following") and the legitimation ("moral underpinnings") which he felt he lacked. He wrote:

> I had inherited a talented staff and a distinguished Cabinet--but I had inherited neither their loyalty nor their enthusiasm. Those I would have to earn. That was the central problem I faced, not just with Kennedy appointees, but with much of the federal bureaucracy, with the Congress, and indeed with the entire nation. I had to prove myself. . . .
>
> Every President has to establish with the various sectors of the country what I call "the right to govern." Just being elected to the office does not guarantee him that right. Every President has to inspire the confidence of the people. Every President has to become a leader, and to become a leader he must attract people who are willing to follow him. Every President has to develop a moral underpinning to his power, or he soon discovers that he has no power at all.
>
> For me, that presented special problems. In spite of more than three decades of public service, I knew I was an unknown quantity to many of my countrymen and to much of the world when I assumed office. I suffered another handicap, since I came to the Presidency not through the collective will of the people but in the wake of tragedy. I had no

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 475-478. [2] Ibid., p. 476. [3] Ibid., p. 475.

> mandate from the voters.
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> A few people were openly bitter about my becoming President. They found it impossible to transfer their intense loyalties from one President to another. I could understand this, although it complicated my task. Others were apprehensive. This was particularly true within the black community. Just when blacks had had their hopes for equality and justice raised, after centuries of misery and despair, they awoke one morning to discover that their future was in the hands of a President born in the South.
>
> Yet in spite of these yearnings for a fallen leader, in spite of some bitterness, in spite of apprehensions, I knew it was imperative that I grasp the reins of power and do so without delay. Any hesitation or wavering, any false step, any sign of doubt, could have been disastrous. The nation was in a state of shock and grief. The times cried out for leadership.[1]

President Johnson did indeed begin with a number of liabilities. He was "not a polished orator, a popular national personality, a powerful factional leader, a respected political theorist or the proponent of some attractive national program." Where he was well-known, there were doubts about his character, especially his crudities compared to the stylish Kennedy. But being unknown, despite his distinguished career in the Senate and his travels as Vice President, was a bigger problem; "in the excitement of the handsome era of Kennedy the King," no one seemed to notice or care about him. Even as President, little attention was paid to Johnson, his arrival was greeted with little public or political enthusiasm, and he was hardly "the generally recognized successor to the leadership of John F. Kennedy."[2]

Yet, perhaps, Johnson need not have worried. The mere fact that he was President raised his status in the eyes of the people, and television and other media gave him positive exposure. Though no pictures of the Cabinet meeting were taken (as a proviso for Robert Kennedy's participation in it), photographs of Johnson with Rusk, Bundy, McNamara, and

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[1] Johnson, Vantage Point, pp. 21, 18.

[2] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, pp. 151-159.

Eisenhower (captioned "First Pictures of LBJ at work as President") were taken and then released to the networks at 5:13 P.M.; Johnson read his proclamation of mourning on television at 4:51 P.M.; and his picture loyally appeared on the cover of Time (despite Hugh Sidey's argument that "Nobody is interested in Johnson yet").[1] Learning about Johnson and seeing him go about the "business of the republic" was reassuring and enobled him.[2] Television encouraged almost immediate faith in the new President by rapidly emphasizing his experience and capabilities:

> That television contributed directly to the "status" of President Johnson was evident in the speed with which over half the respondents accepted his qualifications. Personal documentaries and background stories appeared almost immediately, and in a matter of hours he moved from the relative limbo of the vice-presidency to the status of a "capable" successor to Kennedy.[3]

Bernard Levin's comment on the television program "That Was The Week That Was" indicates some of the difficulty but still the basic success in fitting Johnson into the mold of successor to Kennedy:

> The contrast between President Johnson and his predecessors is more obvious than important. Johnson, unlike Kennedy, is not an intellectual, but then neither was Truman. Johnson is provincial where Kennedy was metropolitan, but his years as leader of the Senate gave him a knowledge, understanding, and control of the realities of power in politics, almost as sophisticated as that of Roosevelt. Johnson, in the inevitable isolation of the Vice Presidency, has had no direct power to exercise, yet Kennedy, unlike Roosevelt, took his deputy fully into his confidence, and shared with him the results of his decisions if not their making. President Johnson will bring to the awful responsibility of his office qualities and a record that offer promise that he will be more than merely the best available shadow of the light that failed.[4]

Although, as with any new incumbent, the estimates of Mr. Johnson rose almost immediately on his assumption of the Presidency, for many it took a process of working through with others to attain a positive view of the new President.[1] Barber notes the difficulties in this process:

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 471-472.

[2] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 43.

[3] Mindak, "Television's Functions," pp. 137, 141.

[4] U.P.I., Four Days, p. 67.

> The wave of adulation for President Kennedy . . . might well have disrupted the people's ability to judge their political leaders rationally. Some of those who were most enthusiastic about Kennedy as President found it difficult to accept the idea that Lyndon Johnson could carry on effectively. One kitchen lady said, "Mr. Johnson will never be the man Mr. Kennedy was; . . . he isn't capable enough in any way." "The greatest President," "another Lincoln," "a hero who died for his people," would be extremely difficult to follow on the national stage until other, calmer standards were brought to bear.[2]

Yet Barber did find "a willingness to withhold judgment until the social recovery process had run its course" and "initial feelings that Lyndon Johnson could not possibly match President Kennedy's stature giving way to the idea that Johnson was different but adequate to the role" as Johnson-doubters were countered in small group conversations. A Negro kitchen helper replied to the charge of Johnson's lack of capability, saying that "he can't be fooled by anybody in the United States because he knows the government situation from the foot up," and a cook replied to an allegation of Johnson's lack of dynamism:

> I think President Kennedy was a very great man. His whole life, his background, and everything showed it. But, now you take Johnson, from what I've read about him...in the newsreel when he traveled around and has been close to the President...that man has...been second to nobody in all his climb to political power. And he has always been a man to stand on his own two feet in a more definite way, where President Kennedy was more energetic and...commanded respect because of his dignity and the way he was, while Johnson, in his way of coming up to it...he had a bull-like way of forcin' it in 'em. And, in a way (laugh) it almost amounted to the same thing in how he used pressure. And, like I say, as far as political, I don't think too many people would push Mr. Johnson around either. I think he'd be a pretty firm man too... In political procedures his tactics might be a little different but if they achieve the same end, it's the same end... It's what you think a man can do.[3]

Though Greenstein feels a shallowness in the instantaneous support of Johnson by Kennedy's student followers, their criticisms are muted as a kind of retrospective idealization of Johnson has set in because his status as President has elevated him:

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[1] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 211; Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 231. For the 41 per cent who worried about how the U.S. would fare without its leader, we might expect a good deal of working through.

[2] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 123. [3] Ibid., p. 128.

> He doesn't fit the traditional New Frontier image . . . that we've been living with for three years.
> Not quite as crisp and not quite as direct as Kennedy.
> He has a sort of heavy Southern accent.
> They had an interview with Johnson taken about a week ago at his ranch and he came out with things that if Kennedy had not been killed . . . Stuff like "America is great and strong . . ." That sort of thing. I would normally think, "What are you? Come off it, man!" You know. However, listening to it now--I listened and sat there. Just the fact that he was in the Presidency gave him a sort of deification.[1]

Sunday morning was a time for the religious legitimation of the new President. While President and Mrs. Johnson attended services at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, clergy upheld him in their prayers while a quarter of the people in the National Opinion Research Center survey prayed that he might have the strength and wisdom to carry on.[2] Samuel Miller prayed for "the sustaining presence of God's holy spirit and divine wisdom" upon the new President.[3] Telling his listeners that "we cannot afford to linger too long, even after a heavy loss like this," Robert L. Edwards called for bipartisan support of President Johnson, making up by their loyalty for any deficiencies in the man:

> We have work to do in giving support to the new President. Now he takes up the office which is almost more than a man can fill. He has asked for God's help. Publicly he has also asked our help. So it is not for us to stand back and wonder whether he is adequate. Our job is to come to his support, and to do all that we can at every level to help make him adequate. A letter would help. Prayer will help. Attention to the integrity of our own citizenship will help. He will need all the backing we can give if he is to do what we expect him to do.[4]

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[1] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 212.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 578; Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 162: for the content of other prayers, see Chapter VII, #1C, above.

[3] Samuel Miller in That Day With God, p. 38.

[4] Robert L. Edwards in That Day With God, p. 110.

"Life must go on though our souls are hurt to the quick" said Julius Mark, and he went on to express gratitude, praise, and blessing for the Constitution and for President Johnson:

> We are grateful that our Constitution provides for immediate and peaceful succession to the Presidency when that awesome office becomes vacant. We thank God that the new President, Lyndon B. Johnson, possesses the ability, the experience, and the ideals as well as the determination and courage to carry on in the glorious tradition of his fallen predecessor. God bless the President of the United States with good health and strength, with wisdom, valor, and vision, as he assumes the heavy burdens of his office.[1]

At the other end of that fateful week, at the union Thanksgiving service at Vernon Place Methodist Church, which President and Mrs. Johnson attended, Stanley Rabinowitz also gave thanks for the bounteous America which remained (the stock market recorded the highest one-day rally in its history on Tuesday),[2] for continuity of government, and for President Johnson's prowess:

> We must be grateful for the continuity of the government under which we live. We must be grateful that the crime committed was not in the pattern of those republics or kingdoms where the bullet is the ballot as well as the weapon.
>
> We are not without a President. We are blessed with a President gifted with the talent of leadership and with proven capabilities. Our freedoms remain uncompromised. Our bounties are rich. Our warehouses are filled to overflowing. There is order in the land. There is no cry of distress in the broad places. For all this we are truly grateful.[3]

Although he did manage to work in private briefings on Vietnam and on the budget on Sunday afternoon, President Johnson was mainly pre-occupied with his ceremonial role in the honoring and burial of President Kennedy on Sunday afternoon and on Monday. With his most prominent move being to come forward in silent prayer while his presidential wreath was placed before the coffin at the Capitol, Johnson clearly played a subordinate role in these ceremonies. Though Mrs. Kennedy was solicitous, saying, "O Lyndon, what an awful way for you to come in," she served as "acting President" in planning the state funeral and was clearly in center stage during it.[1] President Johnson did not resent Mrs. Kennedy's role, was in no hurry to move Mrs. Kennedy out of the Executive Mansion and himself into it, was touched by her phoning him on Thanksgiving, and concurred in her holding a reception for diplomatic guests in addition to his own after the funeral, "one for each administration."[2] While Johnson greeted 220 people in the State Department's reception room and had private conferences with sixteen guests, Mrs. Kennedy manned a reception line in the White House and met privately with four persons: Haile Selassie, Charles de Gaulle, Eamon de Valera, and Prince Philip. Robert Kennedy, who had originally been thought to lead the diplomatic reception both as representative of the Kennedys and of the government,[3] took part in the tearful conference with de Valera. Mrs. Kennedy received de Gaulle "like a queen," in Bundy's phrase, appealing for harmony between France, England, and America and giving him a daisy as a "last remembrance of the President."[4] Later, in President Johnson's conference with him, de Gaulle spoke of the great respect and admiration of the French people for President Kennedy, and Rusk spoke of President Johnson as a "very close associate" of President Kennedy who would maintain our political and military commitments to Europe, which de Gaulle--in a piece of doubletalk according to Johnson--said he knew he could count on.[5] In the reception line, Mikoyan was moved by Mrs. Kennedy's plea, "Please tell Mr. Chairman President that I know he and my husband worked together for a peaceful world, and now he and you must carry on my husband's work,"[1] and the next day President Johnson, in a message to Khrushchev through Mikoyan, stated that he was "in full accord with the policies of President Kennedy" and underscored the responsibility of the two countries for the maintenance and consolidation of peace.[2] Also in the reception line, Mrs. Kennedy told Columbia's Lleras, "Please don't let them forget Jack," and the next day Mrs. Kennedy, in order to physically display unity and confidence in the new Administration, attended Johnson's speech to the Latin American diplomatic corps in which he re-affirmed the pledge of her husband to improve and strengthen the role of the United States in the Alliance for Progress in Latin America.[3]

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[1] Julius Mark in That Day With God, p. 92.

[2] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 40.

[3] Stanley Rabinowitz in That Day With God, p. 189.

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 538, 490.

[2] Ibid., p. 543.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 607-608.

[5] Ibid., pp. 613-614; Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 23.

On Wednesday, November 27 at 12:30 P.M., President Johnson addressed a Joint Session of Congress. Although separated from his taking the oath of office by most of a week, this speech was the equivalent of an inaugural address, completing the legitimation of the new President and setting the tone for the remainder of his term. Until the Joint Session speech, comments Wicker, Johnson "was still no more than President pro tem--the man who was legally replacing Kennedy."[4] Now the same officials from all three branches of government prominent at an inauguration were waiting for the word from the new President--with millions more watching on television--in an occasion which was also ceremonious though more austere than the grand funeral so recently witnessed. Wicker comments:

> It was a spectacle that comes as near as anything ever does in the United States to pageantry--the appearance of a President in a single chamber with his Cabinet, with Congress, with the black-robed Justices

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 610.   [2] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 25.

[3] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 22; Manchester, Death, pp. 610, 628.

[4] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, p. 164.

> of the Court, with the diplomatic representatives of other nations; even the court-jester interludes of Fishbait Miller were appropriate, in that people's gathering. Here were the people's representatives, the people's government, and it was right, it was reassuring, that there should be no gaudy uniforms of privilege, no coats of arms, no prancing horses or ceremonial troops--only these grave men in their drab suits, only the single flag on the rostrum, over it only the carved and star-flanked motto: "In God We Trust."[1]

Attended by the representatives of a modern democracy with an archaic flag and an historic motto in the background, President Johnson had words that suited each. Like Kennedy's Inaugural Address, the outer ring was historic, the penultimate ring was archaic though less strident, and the core was modern. In keeping with Eisenhower's advice to "point out first that you have come to this office unexpectedly and you accept the decision of the Almighty, who in His inscrutable wisdom has now placed you in the position of highest responsibility in this nation," Johnson began his speech by affirming that "all I have, I would have given gladly not to be standing here today."[2] Then he gave some tributes to Kennedy--though not as many as Sorensen wanted[3]--and quickly moved on to the modern core of the speech, using archaic loyalty to Kennedy as motivation for passing Kennedy's legislative program. "No memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the civil rights bill for which he fought," Johnson said in his most stunning passage. After some additional modern calls for continuity and legislation,[4] Johnson concluded with the archaic plea, "Let us here highly resolve that John Fitzgerald Kennedy did not live or die in vain," followed by an historic prayer: "And on this Thanksgiving Eve, as we gather together to ask the Lord's blessing, and give Him our thanks, let us unite in those familiar and cherished words:

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[1] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, pp. 167-168.

[2] Ibid., p. 168; Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 32.

[3] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, p. 168. Sorensen's original draft consisted mainly of tributes to Kennedy; he thought changes by Johnson ruined it.

[4] For details, see #4, below.

> America, America
> God shed His grace on thee,
> And corwn thy good
> With brotherhood
> From sea to shining sea.[1]

Though legally mandated, the process of Johnson's succession to the Presidency was more archaic than historic or modern. If Johnson had been taking over a purely modern office, the legal transfer of power upon the incapacitation ("death" is not a modern concept) of the previous incumbent would have been quite sufficient to complete the process of succession. But clearly, as Johnson himself notes, it was not: oath and speech, though widely separated, were necessary, just as in a normal inauguration, perhaps more so; blessings of God, leaders, and people were needed; reassuring and elevating publicity was helpful; and wrapping himself in Kennedy's mantle seemed essential. Historic civil religion was present in Johnson's turning to prayer upon hearing the news of Kennedy's murder and at other times, in his pleas for God's help and grace at the end of his oath, in his short speech upon arrival in Washington, and at the end of his Joint Session speech, and in the prayers and blessings lavished upon him by leaders, preachers, and people; yet, despite Johnson's own humility and piety, it was strongly shaded toward the archaic in speaking only of God's blessing and not of his judgment, asking God to "crown our good" but not to "mend our every flaw."[2]

Archaism was evident in Johnson's elevation as President, in Kennedy-Johnson rivalry, and in Johnson's attempt to carry on for Kennedy. Although

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Vice P

[1] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, p. 180; Manchester, Death, p. 606 (Sorensen).

[2] Archaism was especially rife, as it often is, in the Thanksgiving Day services in which clergy tended to sanctify America's ill-gotten gains as God's peculiar blessings on his chosen people (see the Rabinowitz excerpt).

XUM

every Vice President tends to be rendered a "nobody," the great leap from vice-presidency to presidency which Johnson had to make--almost from subhuman to superhuman status--was made greater by the degree to which Kennedy had further archaized the presidency, so that only the President--"alone, at the top"--counted. Johnson began with a little self-doubt, fear of presumption, and meekness (Sorensen had written "I who cannot fill Kennedy's shoes must occupy his desk" but then struck it out as too obsequious though no doubt it expressed his own feelings),[1] but he found himself able to take over the elevated presidency Kennedy had bequeathed to him, especially as preachers, television, and public opinion lent him a kind of deification--sometimes recognizing faults but using them as a spur to even greater loyalty,-and he even intensified the "imperial presidency" by building around himself a higher wall of isolation from ordinary mortals.[2] Still, Kennedy was a hard act to follow, and some of the archaic loyalty which he had generated to himself as President did not move on with the presidency but stayed, despite the lack of any legal basis for it, with himself and his family. The apparent conflict over timing between the Kennedys' need to mourn and Johnson's need to succeed--expressed in friction on the plane flight and in disembarking, in delaying Johnson's moving into the Oval Office and his giving his Joint Session speech, in Robert Kennedy's interrupting the Cabinet meeting and banning pictures of it--masked a covert rivalry between Johnson and Robert over which was Kennedy's rightful heir, which memory of these incidents would later help to fan into open flame. For Johnson did not merely want to proceed with his succession despite the mourning process but he wanted to use it, over Robert's objections and obstacles, to enhance his own status as Kennedy's legitimate successor. It was to stress the continuity between administrations that Johnson had Mrs. Kennedy appear with him in the oath-taking picture, wished to leave the plane with her and the coffin (though thwarted), marched near her in the funeral procession, had her actually conduct diplomacy by holding a diplomatic reception ("one for each administration" though, from a modern viewpoint, there was only one), and had her attend his speech on Latin America. Although it would have important modern and historic consequences, Johnson's determination to maintain continuity with the haloed Kennedy and to use his aura, to carry on his work and light the world with his fire, to "carry on in the glorious tradition of his fallen predecessor" without criticism or deviation,[1] left the Kennedy legacy as archaic as ever in its shape and power. The torch had indeed been passed,[2] albeit to an older generation, yet Kennedy's sway was all the more increased.

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 605 (Sorensen's draft of Joint Session speech).

[2] See Schlesinger, Imperial Presidency, p. 214. Isolation enhances sacred kingship elsewhere; in America, popular democracy has enhanced it.

IV

"John Kennedy's death commands what his life conveyed--that America must move forward," said Lyndon Johnson in his speech to the Joint Session of Congress.[3] Indeed, Kennedy's ability to command was enhanced by his death: "Only in death," wrote Tom Wicker, "would he receive the big majority for which he had hoped and worked."[4] Drawing on that majority, on the sense of unity in crisis, and on a decline in partisanship, President Johnson, wrapped in Kennedy's mantle and espousing his programs, built a consensus in Congress and the nation which enacted the log-jammed Kennedy program and overwhelmingly elected Johnson in 1964. Though the work was Johnson's, the original design was Kennedy's, and many, including Johnson himself, put forward the passage of the Kennedy program and the fresh sense of national unity as a fitting memorial to the slain President. Just as "in God's sight David did build the temple" though Solomon actaully carried out his intention, argued Richard Allen, so Kennedy should be credited with the enactment of his programs which Johnson effected.[1] Many factors, of course, contributed to these successes, not least of which was Johnson's own skill as a congressional politician (which Kennedy lacked), but prominent in both Johnson's own rhetoric and in the hearts of his countrymen was a "posthumous obedience" to Kennedy which has religious overtones. Writes Wolfenstein:

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[1] As in this quotation from Julius Mark, preachers rarely suggested any innovation; neither did Eisenhower, advising: "No revolution in purpose or policy is intended or will occur. Rather it will be your purpose to implement effectively the noble objectives so often and so eloquently stated by your great predecessor (cited by Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 32).

[2] The Associated Press by titling its memorial book "The Torch Is Passed," by chiding the Kennedy party for not recognizing on the plane trip that the torch had passed, and by ending with Johnson's Joint Session speech integrates memorialization into the succession process favorably to Johnson.

[3] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, p. 179. [4] Ibid., p. 158.

> The murder of a leader, according to Freud, evokes strong posthumous obedience in his followers, who internalize and make the principles he embodied more binding upon themselves. They feel that they must take it upon themselves to carry out his behests. We would speculate that following the murder of President Kennedy a sense of imperative was widely felt in the adult population. In the time between the assassination and the election of the next year, President Johnson became established in people's minds as dedicated to helping us carry out what President Kennedy had wanted done. The fact that he received an unprecidented popular majority in the election may be ascribed in part to posthumous obedience to the murdered leader.[2]

If "the authoritative ability to command a following" is recognized as the defining characteristic of "charisma," then the dead Kennedy's sway over the American people may be termed a form of charisma--though it fits none of the three main types which Weber defines.[3] I have chosen to call this odd kind of charisma "mythic charisma" because of the mythical character of its source. Americans were, in an ironic twist on Frost's words, "possessed by what they now no more possessed,"[1] and through that possession Kennedy, though dead, had a very real and increased impact on the politics of the living. Some such concept as "mythic charisma" seems to be necessary as an intervening variable between Kennedy's pull as President and the conflicting claims of Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kennedy to be his successor; Kennedy through his death in office had somehow become a much more powerful force than if, say, Kennedy had finished his term and then Johnson and Robert had competed to succeed him, and it is this force, which I call "mythic charisma," that each man tried to latch onto as he sought to wrap himself in Kennedy's mantle, Johnson through his inheritance of the presidency and Robert through consanguinity.

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[1] Richard Allen in That Day With God, p. 25.

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 232, xix. For the rootedness of this process in idealization and identification, see Chapter VII, #3B-3C.

[3] It may be regarded as a residual form of charisma or a source of charisma since it requires living political figures to activate it.

Retelling the whole Kennedy saga in terms of charisma, we see Kennedy as a candidate with his own personal charisma winning the allegiance of the slight majority who voted for him, Kennedy as President invested with the charisma of office as chief of all Americans, and Kennedy as martyred hero with mythic charisma shaping meanings, lives, and policies from beyond the grave.[2] And then, both of them drawing on this mythic charisma, we see Johnson with the charisma of office seeking to fully succeed Kennedy as President and Robert with a curious kind of hereditary charisma (in addition to his own personal charisma) seeking to draw Kennedy's following to himself as John's true successor. The battle lines were already drawn but the battle would not take shape until later; for the moment, Johnson had first drawing rights on Kennedy's mythic charisma.

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[1] Knight, Death of J. K., p. 18; "possession" now has political impact.

[2] For a fuller recapitulation of this part of the saga in these terms with more description of the mythic underpinnings, see Chapter VIII, #5.

Kennedy's death brought an overt decline in partisanship and thereby a covert increase in Democratic strength--under the banner of national unity. As we noted, Kennedy's death brought in its wake a reticence to criticize him (being dead) and a search for positive things to say about him, especially by those who had opposed him, who were also upset by his death and felt a greater need to prove it.[1] Kennedy was no longer available as a partisan figure. Said Bennett J. Sims, "All that puts us on one side of the political fence or the other evaporates in the response we make to our President's dying; the sniper's gun cut down a living soul, not a Democrat."[2] Although disagreement with Kennedy's policies was less objectionable than attacks on his person, such disagreement also declined markedly, especially on the part of opposition leaders, who observed the moratorium on political partisanship much more scrupulously than Democrats did during the month of mourning--and beyond.[3] Although survey research found few (10 per cent) volunteering the answer that "Kennedy's program would be carried on" in response to an open-ended question about what good would come out of the assassination,[4] there is evidence that people were open to such an outcome. Summarizing Sears' study on the effects of the assassination on political partisanship, the authors of Assassination and Political Violence write:

> During the period of mourning for President Kennedy, people appeared to be more attracted toward his policy positions and more sympathetic to their enactment. This is one explanation for the number of domestic programs, originally sponsored by Kennedy, which were passed in the year following his death. Democratic Party supporters appeared stronger in their dedication to the party, and Republicans

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[1] Manchester, Death, pp. 468, 447; David O. Sears, "Effects of the Assassination on Political Partisanship," in Kennedy Assassination, p. 325; see Chapter VII, #3B.

[2] Bennett J. Sims in That Day With God, p. 159.

[3] Sears, "Political Partisanship," pp. 308-319.

[4] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 164.

> were more ambivalent in their attitudes toward their party and less likely to employ it as a source of reference in evaluating policy programs. Republicans appeared less willing than Democrats to criticize programs during the early days of the Johnson administration, and adherents of both parties found themselves more drawn to figures who supported Kennedy policies and less sympathetic to those who criticized them severely.[1]

Moderate Republicans did not exercise more power when supporting Democratic policies (though they were more often asked to join a consensus), but their dissenting opinions were honored more by Democrats who, in their quest for unity, were more sensitive to opposition from this quarter. Conservative Republicans, on the other hand, remained outside this new centrist circle, and--with their remarks being less pointed after the assassination--Democrats tended to find their positions irrelevant rather than a negative reference point.[2]

President Johnson both took advantage of and built that "nonpartisan" consensus behind Kennedy's program. With an aim to restore conficence in our system of government, Johnson decided to move forward with energy and dispatch while "the sobering influence of national tragedy caused men in all walks of life to think of the country's interests rather than their own lesser interests."[3] Johnson knew that this mood would not last, as the Feshbachs' research confirms.[4] So he acted quickly. "While I knew . . . that it would not last," he wrote, "I believed that there was a consensus--a very broad, deep, and honest consensus--among most groups within our diverse society that would hold together long enough for the imperatives (of Kennedy's program) to be accomplished. That faith was fully justified."[1] In part, Johnson saw this situation as an extraordinary gift: "I seriously doubt that any other President in our history ever enjoyed the breadth of earnest, willing, and selfless support that was accorded to our efforts in those early years to deal with the unfinished business on the American agenda."[2] But he also saw the situation as calling forth a task of leadership:

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[1] Kirkham, Assassination, p. 114.

[2] Sears, "Political Partisanship," pp. 323-325.

[3] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 34; Lyndon Baines Johnson, The Choices We Face (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 1.

[4] A month after the assassination, 10 per cent of those surveyed favored Kennedy's policies more, but 20 per cent favored them less; at that time, they were probably freer to express their genuine opinions than they were immediately after the assassination; Feshbach, "Personality and Political Values," p. 302. See Chapter VII, #3B.

> The most significant advantage I had during the transition period was a genuine desire for national unity on the part of most people. America had learned, in the cruelest possible way, where hatred and divisiveness could lead the nation, and I think they were ready to try another route. My task was to show them the way, using the "bully pulpit" of the Presidency.[3]

Johnson used his persuasive powers to the hilt with many diverse groups. In the face of greater black apprehensiveness,[4] Lyndon Johnson stepped into the breach to mollify black doubts and fears and to champion Kennedy's civil rights bill, reassuring black leaders and groups that Kennedy's dream of equality had not died with him. To Senator Dirksen and his Republican colleagues, President Johnson made an appeal "to forget partisan politics, so that we can weather the national crisis in which we are involved and unite our people."[5] Believing that in these extraordinary times most Americans were ready to rise above past differences, Johnson's constant plea was for unity as he spoke with captains of industry and labor leaders and government workers and newspeople and religious leaders, accomplishing much of the task of building a consensus before John Kennedy was buried and during his first week in office.[6] And unity--a unity behind

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[1] Johnson, Choices We Face, p. 2.

[2] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[3] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 33.

[4] See #1 and Chapter VII, #2B.

[5] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 29.

[6] Ibid., pp. 30, 33.

XUM

Kennedy's program (and a unity which sought to include the South in the hope of reconciliation)--was a prominent theme in Johnson's speech to the Joint Session of Congress:

> We will serve all of the nation--not one section or one sector or one group--but all Americans. These are the United States--a united people with a united purpose. Our American unity does not depend on unanimity. We have differences. But now, as in the past, we can de[illegible] from these differences strength, not weakness; wisdom, not despair. Both as a people and as a government we can unite upon a program, a program which is wise, just, enlightened, and constructive.[1]

Continuity with Kennedy was a closely related theme, a source of unity. Recalling that Kennedy's inaugural challenge had been to "let us begin," Johnson built upon it dramatically in his own inaugural-like Joint Session speech, saying, "Today, in this moment of new resolves, I would say to my fellow Americans--let us continue."[2] He called for quick action on tax reduction, civil rights, and virtually every other point of legislation pending in Congress when Kennedy had been killed--education, youth employment, medical care for the aged--as well as pledging continuity in foreign affairs, thus marrying himself to the Kennedy program and the Kennedy legacy, with his own emphasis on the theme of consensus. Johnson's first priority was to "try to display to the world that we could have unity and transition, that the program of President Kennedy would be carried on."[3] In a united nation that had closed ranks behind his own leadership, he sought diligently to effect that priority in the month before Congress reconvened after its Thanksgiving recess, the same Congress that had consistently denied Kennedy those programs, but which now--in response to the people's hankering for continuity[4]--was in that respect a different Congress.

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[1] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, p. 170.

[2] Ibid., p. 179.

[3] Ibid., pp. 179, 181, 161.

[4] Barber, "Peer-Group Discussion," p. 129.

Continuity in foreign affairs is more directly within a President's bailiwick, more long-term, and almost inevitable. Every new President "must begin by writing between the lines of what past Presidents have written," wrote Johnson, noting that he had received international commitments from Kennedy, much of which, in turn, had been bequeathed to him by Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower.[1] Johnson made clear that he intended to continue the government's established foreign policy and to maintain the alliances of Kennedy, Eisenhower, and Truman with a view to simultaneously keeping firm and thawing the Cold War; he picked up Kennedy's commitment to Vietnam--though whether what he did with it is what Kennedy would have done is a much-debated question;[2] and he re-affirmed Kennedy's pledge to strengthen the Alliance for Progress. With Kennedyesque rhetoric he told the United Nations on December 17 that the United States aimed to create a world that can be "safe for diversity and free from hostility."[3] In the first test of his power, Johnson successfully blocked credit restrictions on sales to Communist countries through a series of moves stretching from the day after Kennedy's funeral till Congress recessed for Christmas.[4]

When Congress reconvened in January, President Johnson advocated a tax cut in his State of the Union message and subsequently laid the prestige of the Presidency on the line--saying "What's it for if not to be laid on the line?" over objections from cautious advisers--behind the civil rights bill as a moral issue which could not be avoided even though it would set him apart forever from the South and its political support.[5] The next ten months saw the passage of forty-five out of the fifty-two major proposals before Congress, including the tax bill (February 27), the food stamp bill, the War on Poverty, Urban Mass Transit Act, the Housing Act, the Nurse Training Act, and the civil rights bill (passed on July 2 and signed by President Johnson on July 4, underscoring its accord with freedom's founding).[1] Although Kennedy had privately predicted the months of passage of the tax and civil rights bills and publicly predicted their passage by summer and though Republican and Democratic leaders of both houses of Congress asserted in the summer of 1964 that Kennedy's program and especially these bills would have passed even if Kennedy had lived--a situation Sorensen used to justify his inclusion of these acts in Kennedy's legislative record[2]--I believe that Kennedy's death had a significant impact on at least the speed of passage of these bills and that much of the credit should go to Johnson's "skillful facilitation" of them (to use Sorensen's phrase).

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[1] Johnson, Choices We Face, p. 5. [2] See #6, below, & Chapter VI, #7.

[3] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 23. [4] Ibid., pp. 39-40. [5] Ibid., p. 38.

As the theory of posthumous obedience suggests and history confirms, on the whole, assassination has aided the assassinated President's programs. In the period of national mourning that typically followed presidential assassinations in the past, "specific legislation associated with the President or the circumstances of his assassination was passed sooner or in more severe form than would have otherwise been the case."[3] For example, Garfield's assassination speeded up the passage of civil service legislation pending at his death, and McKinley's assassination contributed slightly to the passage of restrictive immigration laws. The great exception is Lincoln.[1] His conciliatory attitude toward the South and his "soft" position on civil rights were reversed rather than intensified by his death when a successor, much weaker and less popular than he, proved no match for a recalcitrant Congress. Thus presidential assassination in itself does not guarantee the continuance of a dead President's policies and programs though it may predispose the people in that direction; in no case, has the legislative and political impact been a "logical" or automatic response to the assassination (not even in the area of preventing assassinations of similar stripe).[2] Kennedy's death had the legislative impact that it did because President Johnson took it up and used it, wrapped himself in the mantle of Kennedy, worked hard to build a consensus while the unity which the assassination had bred (and which he saw to it that it bred) was still vivid, and maneuvered adroitly, within the congressional process he knew so well, to secure the passage of particular bills.

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[1] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 41; White, Making President 1964, p. 328; Manchester, Death, p. 508. Johnson also got 69 per cent of his bills passed in 1965; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 187.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 508; Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 848, 856; Richard Wilson in Look, November 17, 1964; Neustadt guesses that Kennedy would have seen his tax and civil rights bills passed--with rancor and delay--if he had lived but credits both Kennedy and Johnson: Presidential Power, p. 204.

[3] Kirkham, Assassination, p. 116, based on Murray Edelman and Rita James Simon, "Presidential Assassinations: Their Meaning and Impact on American Society," Ethics, vol. 79, April 1969, pp. 191-221.

That was by no means the only possible outcome to Kennedy's death. But there is a sense in which President Johnson had to take that tack if he were to succeed at all. According to Wicker, Johnson had to retain Kennedy's program and personnel. Though it is at least likely that Johnson was personally committed to civil rights, he was also constrained by causes outside himself and outside his control:

> Johnson had no political choice whatever but to commit himself to the civil rights bill Kennedy had sent to Congress. In the first place, the only program of action it was possible to present in five days was the Kennedy program. In the second place, it was still the Kennedy family and political apparatus that dominated not only the

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[1] One may question whether Roosevelt was faithfully followed by Truman.

[2] Kirkham, Assassination, pp. 116-117; for proposed gun control and its failure, see #7, below.

> organization but the spirit of the Democratic party; by the mere act of taking the oath of office, Johnson had by no means assumed the title "President" in all its meaning. That would have to be won, and it would not be won by casting aside the cardinal points of the Kennedy program. In the third place, there remained the social necessity that had driven Kennedy reluctantly to present the most sweeping civil rights legislation in history. . . . Finally, the cause of Negro rights had come to be a rallying point of urban "liberalism" . . . that controlled the big population states and thus the Presidential elections.[1]

For similar reasons, Johnson had to keep Kennedy's Cabinet and aides, at least in the beginning, though many of his hardest problems were with those who had been closest to Kennedy. Says Wicker:

> Johnson had no time to conduct an effective "transition," that peculiarly American fruit-basket-turn-over of officials that had to be accomplished by most newly elected Presidents; he could not substitute a new Administration for the old. Even if he could have, an exodus of Kennedy's aides would have been equal to an exodus of Democratic confidence in Lyndon Johnson as well as of public confidence in the government. And a shift away from him of the political loyalties that had flowed so strongly to Kennedy and his family would amount to the creation of a powerful opposition within Johnson's own party; for Robert Kennedy was a natural and appealing symbol to which these loyalties, once set free, might instantly attach themselves.[2]

In sum, it was clear from the first what Johnson had to do to achieve his first priority:

> Johnson had to cover himself with the mantle of Kennedy as quickly as...possible. He had to retain the Kennedy staff and Cabinet--a task at which he was largely successful for as long as he needed to be. And he had to reassure the world that the flow of policy was unbroken.[3]

And yet there is indication in Johnson's own writing that the choice of his first priority was dictated not only by political necessity and perhaps by personal conviction but also by his own sense of posthumous obedience to Kennedy. "I knew from the moment President Kennedy died," he wrote in his official biography, "that I must assume the awesome responsibility of uniting the country and moving toward the goals that he had set for us."[4] Concerned, as he put it in his Joint Session speech, that Kennedy

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[1] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, pp. 172-174. [2] Ibid., p. 163. [3] Ibid., p. 164.
[4] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 12.

"not die in vain," Johnson set upon legislation as the means by which he could give Kennedy's death meaning, which was a problem for the new President as it was for the rest of the country. He wrote, "The most important factor that influenced my decision to press for congressional action was this: if any sense were to come of the senseless events which had brought me to the Office of the Presidency, it would come only from my using the experience I had gained as a legislator to encourage the legislative process to function as the modern era required."[1] In his book Johnson also praises the Kennedy officials whom he retained and who gave him so much trouble and argues that his main motive in keeping them was his loyalty to the dead Kennedy:

> Washington columnists wrote that I had accomplished a political master stroke in convincing most of the Kennedy appointees to continue serving in my administration. I saw it neither as political nor as a masterstroke.
>
> It is true that I asked the top Kennedy-appointed officials to stay on, not just for a while, but for as long as I was President. It is true that by remaining on the job they helped give the government and the nation a sense of continuity during the critical times--a sense of continuity which in turn strengthened my hand as Chief Executive. It is also true that I benefited from the Kennedy administration. But in the final analysis, when I asked those appointees to stay on I did so out of a deep-rooted sense of responsibility to John F. Kennedy. Rightly or wrongly, I felt from the very first day in office that I had to carry on for President Kennedy. I considered myself the caretaker of both his people and his policies. He knew when he selected me as his running mate that I would be the man required to carry on if anything happened to him. I did what I believed he would have wanted me to do. I never wavered from that sense of responsibility, even after I was elected in my own right, up to my last day in office.
>
> I eventually developed my own programs and policies, but I never lost sight of the fact that I was the trustee and custodian of the Kennedy administration.[2]

As Kennedy's successor, Kennedy's legacy belonged to Johnson to do with as he would, and, thus married together, Kennedy became the originator and Johson the executor of the same administration, so that how Kennedy is remembered depends, at least in part, as Neustadt put it, on how we remember Lyndon Johnson.[1] Although the issue of this marriage includes the debacle of Vietnam to come in foreign affairs as well as the triumph of the Kennedy-Johnson legislative program, Johnson took responsibility for what he did with what Kennedy left him. Reviewing the legislative accomplishments of the first ten months of 1964, Johnson wrote in a spirit of posthumous obedience:

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[1] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 35, and Choices We Face, p. 2.

[2] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 19.

> Looking back, I believe that John Kennedy would have approved of the way his successor brought the nation together and mobilized its energies in the wake of tragedy, uncertainty, and doubt. That remains one of the great satisfactions of my Presidency.[2]

Passage of the Kennedy legislative program under Johnson is a complex phenomenon in which many factors were involved. Behind the passage of the civil rights bill, for instance, there was, as Wicker points out, for Johnson as for Kennedy, the interest-based pressure of pivotal black minorities allied with urban liberals which any modern politician would have to take into account, and there were good historic reasons for its passage as well.[3] Unlike the archaic Kennedy, Johnson was bent on making Congress work as the modern era required and was willing to take the risk of putting his presidential prestige on the line for what he believed and wanted. In his Joint Session speech, he propounded an historic sense of unity which is neither archaic unanimity nor modern fragmentation but which envelops differences and draws strength from their interaction and dialogue, perhaps along the lines of a pluralistic interpretation of "e pluribus unum."

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[1] Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 208. Kennedy loyalists who refused Johnson as legitimate successor stressed contrasts: see #5 and #6.

[2] Johnson, Vantage Point, p. 41.

[3] For Kennedy's annunication of the moral case for a civil rights bill, see Chapter VI, #6, above.

XUM

Yet Johnson lapsed into an archaism similar to Kennedy's when he spoke of putting the country's interests ahead of our lesser interests: to the modern point of view there is nothing greater than our own interests and the state exists to serve them, and the historic viewpoint, which is less sanguine about the untrammeled domination of private interests, is also skeptical of national ones. The consensus Johnson sought did rest to a very large degree on a somewhat false as well as temporary unanimity and was not really the compromise of competing interests which modernism champions and in which an historic perspective seeks to be ingredient. "All that puts us on one side of the political fence or the other" should not evaporate when a politician-governor dies if our partisanship reflects our interests and values. From modern and historic viewpoints, partisanship is not a nasty, petty, divisive sideshow to be discarded and transcended when nobler motives come into play, but it is integral to our system at its best (though moderated some in historic politics). The decline of partisanship after Kennedy's death did not mean that a universal position reigned but rather that our traditional wrangling political process was bypassed to a great degree,[1] giving an unfair advantage to the Democrats in the name of non-partisanship. Even if one sees historic and modern gains in the Kennedy-Johnson legislative program, one cannot help but notice the large role in its passage of an archaic posthumous obedience to a very powerful Kennedy not only based in unified popular sentiment and its congressional ramifications but also spearheaded by President Johnson in his resolve to be--beyond any modern or historic obligation--a caretaker for Kennedy as his presidential successor.

V

Lyndon Johnsons' claim to be John Kennedy's successor rested on

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[1] Cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 255.

XUM

his occupancy of the Presidency and his successful carrying out of Kennedy's program. Robert Kennedy's claim to be John Kennedy's successor rested on his close relationship to Kennedy as brother and advisor. In their rivalry, which split the country, party, and administration, each sought to gain the territory of the other. Johnson sought to secure the presidency in his own right through re-election and to legitimate his present hold on the office through firming up his relationship to John Kennedy in the minds of the people. Secure in his relationship to John Kennedy (and elevated to replace him as head of the Kennedy clan), Robert sought after an appointive or elective office through which he could carry on his brother's unfinished journey. Neither was completely successful.

During the "interregnum" in which Johnson finished out Kennedy's term, Johnson sought to "shore up Kennedy's selection of him three years earlier as Vice-Presidential nominee by creating the impression that the entire Kennedy team had believed him to be the second-best man in the country."[1] But he made no headway in getting the public to believe--much less getting former Kennedy aides to support--the notion that he had been John Kennedy's right-hand man. That distinction had clearly been Robert's, not Johnson's.[2] Writes Newfield:

> Elected to the office of Vice President, Johnson watched helplessly as Robert Kennedy acted like the Vice President. Johnson was rarely consulted on patronage matters. He was often absent from important meetings when Robert Kennedy was invited. And he certainly had much less access to the President than did the Attorney General.[3]

Time magazine--as the 1962 promotional book Robert F. Kennedy: The Brother Within proclaimed on its front cover--had spoken of Robert as "second only to the President as the most powerful figure in the U. S. government, . . . the President's closest counselor, . . . the New Frontier's Number 2 man."[1] Going further, Democratic National Committee Chairman John M. Bailey reported: "When Jack Kennedy wanted to be alone in a room with just one man, that man was Bobby. He wasn't just the President's Number 2 man. Bobby was Number 1½."[2] That remark became a Washington joke, but it was more than a joke.[3] Said John Kennedy of his brother, "Bobby's easily the best man I've ever seen. . . . I'll take his word over anybody's."[4] Concludes the authors of Triumph and Tragedy:

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[1] Manchester, Death, p. 639.

[2] Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1968 (New York: Pocket Books, 1968), p. 193.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 199.

> No brothers could have been closer, more single-minded in purpose, more united in their efforts. In times of Jack's greatest crises (e.g., during the Bay of Pigs invasion), he had turned to his brother. . . . He was his brother's total partner; their bond was complete and mutual.[5]

Johnson could not claim that kind of relationship, could not claim that he had worked most intimately with Kennedy and was therefore in the best position to carry on his work. Far from even making such a claim credible, some former Kennedy aides undercut Johnson completely as unable to succeed Kennedy in anything but a formal sense. As we noted, Sorensen had almost written his belief that Johnson could not fill Kennedy's shoes into Johnson's own first major speech.[6] Such attitudes on the part of Kennedy's former aides was an important part of what Johnson referred to as "the Kennedy problem:"

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[1] Robert E. Thompson and Hortense Myers, Robert F. Kennedy: The Brother Within (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1962), front cover. The title itself is testimony to the mythic identification of the two brothers.

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 4.

[3] Associated Press, Triumph and Tragedy: The Story of the Kennedys, ed. by Sidney C. Moody, Jr. (New York: Morrow, 1968), p. 201.

[4] Thompson, Robert F. Kennedy: The Brother Within, back cover.

[5] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 201.

[6] Manchester, Death, p. 605; see #3, above.

> Johnson was trying to mold an administration of his own, proceed with programs of his own, preparing to campaign to be elected President in his own right. But he met with strong antagonisms from the young idealists Jack Kennedy had attracted to Washington who thought, as one cruelly put it, that Camelot had become Dogpatch.[1]

Johnson became so sensitive to continuing loyalty to Kennedy that he rebuked a secret service agent for wearing a PT 109 tie clip, sharply reminding him that administrations had changed.[2] Eventually, Johnson realized that he could not keep the Kennedy team intact and would have to build his own team. His delusion had been a "symptom of the Kennedy passion," of the need, as he himself had put it, to retain "the aura of Kennedy."[3] But that aura had never been fully his to control and got in his way, so that he was probably best served by the resignation of those loyalists who remained under its spell. Sorensen resigned January 11, followed by Weisner (January 13), Schlesinger (January 29), Reardon (February 5) and Salinger (in March) while Shriver, Bundy, O'Donnell and O'Brien stayed on with the Johnson team as did the entire Cabinet, including Robert Kennedy as Attorney General.[4]

Robert Kennedy was the heart of Johnson's "Kennedy problem." As an alternative object of loyalty with his own claims to be Kennedy's successor and ensconced with relative independence in his Justice Department, President Johnson was able neither to control him nor to reach an accord with him nor--without threatening to jeopardize support from a significant wing of the Democratic Party--to break with him.[5] The result was a series of "misunderstandings" that developed into an "almost open feud" as Johnson

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[1] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 208.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 626. [3] Ibid., p. 482. [4] Ibid., p. 640.

[5] Wicker, JFK and LBJ, p. 163, quoted in #4, above. Like a mistress whom the wife had to maintain because her late husband willed it, Johnson had to maintain Robert as a reluctant retainer in his court without ever patching up their differences.

XUM

sought to deal with the anomaly of Robert Kennedy. The authors of Triumph and Tragedy explain:

> To the new Chief Executive, Bob Kennedy represented a problem which was unique in the history of Presidential succession. Here was a Cabinet member who looked like, sounded like, and thought like the slain leader, who had been his second self; who was one of his two chief mourners (one of the principals in the unforgettable drama of Kennedy's funeral), and who at times had exercised authority in his brother's name. . . . Clearly, Johnson regarded the late President's brother as a formidable obstacle.[1]

Robert Kennedy did not know what to make of himself. He was despondent and moody, diffident and withdrawn, and a friend got the feeling that he wondered about the existence of God.[2] He was preoccupied with his brother's loss and saw himself, at first, not as a successor but just as a stand-in. His job was that of a memorializer who took it upon himself to write an introduction to John Kennedy's Profiles in Courage rather than, so to speak, writing the next chapter.[3] Only gradually did he form a mind of his own. Newfield writes:

> The assassination punctured the center of Robert Kennedy's universe. It removed the hero-brother for whom he had submerged all of his own competitive instincts. It took away, in one instant of insanity, all of the power they had struggled together for ten years to achieve, and gave it to another, whom they both mistrusted. It thrust a man trained for the shadows into the sunlight. It made Robert Kennedy, a man unprepared for introspection, think for the first time in his life, what *he* wanted to do, and what *he* stood for.
>
> It took Robert months to recover. He would slouch for hours at his desk in the Justice Department and stare out the window. He lost weight and lacked vitality. He would stroll alone, or with his dog Brumus, aimlessly around Washington or the grounds of his home in Virginia. He frequently visited his brother's grave at Arlington. Even in crowds he seemed alone. When he spoke of his brother on St. Patrick's Day, 1964, in Scranton and at the Democratic Convention in August, he wept openly. When crowds mobbed him in Manila and Cracow, he would mumble to his aides, "It was for him, it was for him."[4]

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[1] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 201-203, based on Manchester, Death, p. 475.

[2] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 201, 203. Newfield's comment below also suggests a threatened loss of faith but with Kennedy as god-like center.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 31-32.

In this mood, Robert Kennedy confronted President Johnson more as a sullen presence and advocate of delay than as an active challenger. Seeing Robert moping around and getting--through his lack of enthusiasm--in the way of the Great Society that was aborning, Johnson suggested that Robert represent the government on a good will tour of Asia in January 1964, and Robert readily accepted. But when he returned, very little was made of the trip or his findings, and he concluded that he was being "used as a decoration to paste the Kennedy name over the politics of another man."[1] In June, Robert offered to serve as Ambassador to South Vietnam should Lodge resign, but Johnson kindly declined to expose him to such danger.[2] Eventually, the real question of the vice-presidency took center stage, and Johnson had to face the "question which was central to the politics of the Democratic Party in the summer of 1964--his attitude toward the Kennedy family as represented by Robert."[3] And Robert had to decide how much he wanted the vice-presidency under Johnson. Ironically, like Lazarus and the rich man, Kennedy was now powerlessly considering the very office which he had once had the power to discourage his brother from offering to Johnson, which he had pared down for Johnson and virtually exercised himself.[4] "Overnight everything was inverted," writes Newfield. "Johnson had the power, sat at his brother's desk, and now Robert was powerless. Now it was Robert who half-desired the vice-presidency and Lyndon Johnson who had the authority to give it or deny it" and rather relished having that power.[5]

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 313.

[2] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 208.

[3] White, Making President 1964, p. 310.

[4] Ibid.: Johnson was embittered because Robert, even more than John, ignored him; yet the notion that the Vice President is usually the Number 2 man is highly dubious. For Lazarus and the rich man, see Luke 16:19-31.

[5] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 200: Johnson told of dumping Robert in a cruel, profane, mimicking manner. Cf. Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 61.

With the death of John Kennedy casting its long shadow over the pre-convention campaign, Robert Kennedy did not have to propose himself as a vice-presidential candidate. "The ghost of J.F.K. has been a far from negligible factor influencing the choice of candidates and styles of campaigning all over the country," wrote Kimball.[1] Besides the genuine Kennedy loyalists, there were plenty of others, even former opponents, ready to latch on to the Kennedy mystique for what it could do for them. "The Kennedy name is a property that conniving politicians want to make use of," wrote White, and Reston remarked, as he observed the Kennedy legend growing and deepening, that "even many of his political opponents who had condemned him are now seeking a candidate who looks and sounds like him."[2] Kennedy-for-Vice-President clubs and statements sprouted everywhere. In the March 10 New Hampshire primary, Kennedy received 25,861 write-in votes for Vice President to Johnson's 29,861 votes for President.[3] Though Kennedy deplored this unauthorized attempt to force him on Johnson as "boorish and amateurish," he basically did nothing either to mobilize or to repudiate the support of the Kennedy loyalists and fellow travelers, recognizing the choice of a running mate as the President's prerogative and awaiting his decision.[4]

Finally, at the end of July, Johnson made his decision. The Republican nomination of Goldwater enabled him to dump Robert Kennedy since Robert's following would not be voting for Goldwater anyway (as they might have if Rockerfeller or Scranton had been the nominee)[5] and since Robert would be more of a liability than an asset in the South and parts of the Midwest where Johnson would be contesting Goldwater for votes. To disclose his decision in these political terms on July 29, Johnson called Robert in for a secret meeting (which both leaked versions of), and, when Robert refused to announce his withdrawal, Johnson disclosed Robert's exclusion indirectly by announcing on television that all of his Cabinet members had been eliminated from consideration as vice-presidential nominees on July 30.[1] It was clear, however, to the three newsmen with whom Johnson privately shared his version of the dumping that more than strictly political considerations were involved; Johnson was fighting for his own breathing space. He saw Robert Kennedy as "a challenge to his power over the Party" and had even solicited and obtained pledges from the fifty state Democratic Party chairmen to support his dumping of Robert before he told him.[2] Johnson wanted to be rid of the Kennedy attachment and govern in his own right. He was uncomfortable being considered a usurper and tired of the press' unending murmuring with nostalgic comparisons between the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. To put the rival successors to Kennedy on the same ticket would not do, for even their notions of succession were different: for Johnson, it was--after maintaining continuity and paying his debt to Kennedy by enacting his programs--succeeding by going beyond him and without him; for Robert, it was largely restoration. "To attach a Kennedy name to his own name," wrote White, "would mean forever sharing the title of the Presidency with a ghost. . . . If Johnson were to prove himself in a campaign for the Presidency, he must prove himself alone."[3]

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[1] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 31.

[2] White, Making President 1964, p. 313; Manchester, Death, p. 625.

[3] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 209.

[4] White, Making President 1964, p. 313.

[5] Greenstein, "Young Men and Death," p. 212.

With the Republican nomination of Goldwater, both the Democratic nomination and the election were basically in Johnson's hands, and the only suspense revolved around the choice of his running mate which he drew out, coyly, as long as he could. Johnson was in complete control of the Democratic National Convention and, while he knew that a film tribute to Kennedy had to be shown with Robert introducing it, he saw to it that no clips of Robert were included in the film and that his appearance would come after the vice-presidential nomination.[1] Nevertheless, though it was planned as a Johnson feast, the convention was "stolen from under his very eyes" as delegate enthusiasm was tempered by the realization that Lyndon Johnson was their choice chiefly because of that day in Dallas and as their attention was diverted to his predecessor. The most moving moment in this foregone convention turned out to be the Kennedy memorial film.[2] Delegates wept as they viewed the twenty-minute emotional film of Kennedy's life and achievements, which closed with song and a sense of the joy of life and youth as Kennedy taught his baby boy how to tickle his chin with a buttercup.[3] Thundering applause had met each mention of John Kennedy's name at the convention, and, when Robert had mounted the podium to introduce the film, the delegates gave him a standing ovation with applause building and building and going on for over ten minutes, the delegates "pouring out their emotions in applause as if it could penetrate the flame and the concrete and the cool earth of that grave in Arlington."[4] When Robert finally quelled the demonstration (which he had not encouraged and tried repeatedly to interrupt), he extolled Kennedy as a celestial luminary in Shakespeare's lines:

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[1] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 211-212; White, Making President 1964, p. 315.

[2] White, Making President 1964, p. 315. [3] Ibid., p. 313.

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[1] White, Making President 1964, p. 314.

[2] Manchester, Death, p. 626; A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 213.

[3] White, Making President 1964, p. 348.

[4] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 213: the Associated Press estimated the applause as lasting thirteen minutes, Manchester as fifteen minutes (Death, p. 626), White as twenty-two minutes (Making President 1964, p. 348).

> When he shall die
> Take him and cut him out in little stars
> And he will make the face of heaven so fine
> That all the world will be in love with night
> And pay no worship to the garish sun.[1]

The succession of John Kennedy was apparently not to be merely a matter of obeisance following his assassination. President Johnson had faithfully upheld and taken over the Kennedy legacy, had forged a broad consensus with its help, had enacted Kennedy's legislative program, but that was still not enough to make him undisputed master of America's political and spiritual life. The ghost of John Kennedy still dominated the scene, not in terms of the substance of politics--about which there was no real disagreement at modern and historic levels between his rival successors at this point--but at the archaic level of tears and applause, of name and style, of murmurings and hopes. Johnson was starting to break free, to seek his own breathing room, to establish his own empire, but Robert Kennedy was still archaically attached to Kennedy's ghost and would become more so before he finally broke with him. Between the two men there was no possibility of reconciliation, not only because of deep personal antagonisms but because the archaic question of succession which divided them was non-negotiable. Modern interests can be adjudicated on the basis of mutual concessions and benefits. Historic values can be compromised because the best course, which is often the choice of a lesser evil, always involves finding a balance between limited goods. But any defection from archaic loyalties is heresy, and, at that rate, neither Johnson nor Robert was willing to give in to the other. "Johnson and Kennedy seemed to be strapped onto opposite sides of the same seesaw," writes Newfield, "separated by generation, geography, politics, temperament, and ambition. One of them could not rise in popularity without the other falling. The nation could only perceive them as the alternative masks of the Democratic Party."[1] In their archaic struggle, Johnson was clearly in the ascendant at this point, especially at an instrumental level, but Robert was also quite clearly keeping him off balance from his end of the seesaw. The interregnum ended where it had begun: nine months after the Kennedy assassination, Johnson had retained his hold on the presidency and Robert had retained his identification with Kennedy, and neither man had succeeded in fully succeeding President Kennedy both in office and in spirit.

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[1] For a complete text of Robert's remarks, see Robert F. Kennedy, Promises to Keep (Kansas City, Mo.: Hallmark Cards, Inc., 1969), p. 7.

VI

On August 25, 1964, while the Democratic National Convention was still in progress, Robert Kennedy announced his candidacy for the United States Senate from the state of New York. Mayor Robert Wagner of New York City had publically endorsed him, with urgings from President Johnson, four days previous, citing his "personal eminence," his "heroic" advocacy of civil rights and "the dazzling magic of his name."[2] Two weeks previous to the announcement of candidacy, The New York Times had editorialized:

> Why Robert Kennedy has any special claim on New York to rescue him from non-office is a mystery. . . . The cold fact is that Mr. Kennedy appears to have decided that his ambitions will be best and most immediately served by finding a political launching pad in New York State.[3]

Repeatedly, his enemies said he was "consumed with selfish ambition, a ruthless opportunist exploiting his brother's legend."[1] Dynastic traditions were also ascribed to him. Moving directly from John Kennedy's death to Robert as his successor, the memorial book Triumph and Tragedy states:

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 200.

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 61; A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 211.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 158.

> During his recovery from his back operation, John Kennedy said: "Just as I went into politics when Joe died, if anything happened to me tomorrow my brother Bobby would run for my seat. And if anything happened to him, my brother Teddy would run for us."
>
> That was the way in the Kennedy family. In sailing in the young days Joe Jr. taught Jack who taught Bob who taught Ted. Now in a time of grief in the nation and in the family, the torch had passed down to Robert.[2]

Name, ambition, legend, and dynasty were significant ingredients in Robert Kennedy's rise, as he and his defenders readily admitted while objecting to overplaying them. Robert owned his name to be a "tremendous advantage" though the idea of an American dynasty did not sit well with many.[3] Nicholas Katzenbach acknowledged the dynastic impulse but saw it overshadowed by a more personal sense of "responsibility to carry on what Jack had started."[4] Likewise, Robert's ambition was evident--his desire to rectify his painful fall from the orbit of presidential power, his need to prove that he could win an elective office,[5] even the therapy of following his instinct for politicking which helped to lift him out of depression as he threw himself into the Senate campaign. But friends saw his ambition as "not for himself but to complete his brother's journey."[6] Finally, though he does not find it exhaustive of him, Pemm Kimball sees Robert as the "living expression of the Kennedy legend."[7] He asserts that

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 17.

[2] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 201. John Kennedy gave Robert a cigarette case inscribed, "After me, how about you?"; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 99. (The Torch Is Passed saw Johnson receiving the torch, #3).

[3] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 234; Newfield. Robert Kennedy, p. 291; Penn Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 54.

[4] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 204. [5] Ibid. (according to Ethel).

[6] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 17, 158; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 201.

XUM

"Robert's successful transfer of operations to a strange state--New York--with strong political traditions of its own would have been unthinkable without the magic name of Kennedy" and avers that "the phenomenal political rebirth of Robert Francis Kennedy as senator from New York and possible heir to the Presidency has been a direct legacy . . . of the memories of his late brother."[1] At the risk of oversimplifying a complex phenomenon, we will concentrate on the mythic strands in the rise and demise of Robert Kennedy as the last chapter in the Kennedy myth.[2]

Admirers and detractors of Robert Kennedy agreed that mythic elements made a significant contribution to his success but disagreed on the degree of importance and of exploitation. What seems clear is that people were ready to be "exploited," if that is what it was, for it was out of their own deep needs that they had created and developed the Kennedy myth (with the help of the media). "Kennedy images have taken on a reality of their own in the politics of the late Sixties," writes Kimball,[3] and while both Johnson and Robert Kennedy used them neither could control them, not Robert, much less Johnson. Despite the fact that Robert was an "individual quite unlike the fallen President," as time blurred the actual memories of Kennedy, mythic imagination made Robert a mirror for the idealized residue of John Kennedy. "As the recollection of John F. Kennedy actually grows dimmer with time, the image expands," writes Penn Kimball. "The image is what people need to believe, and Bobby is the visible reminder, triggering all the emotions that accompany that vision."[4] As the "surviving symbol of unfulfilled promise," the people as well as Robert himself had a need for him to complete his brother's truncated journey, making sense of it through a politics of expiation:

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[1] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, pp. 3, 30, 33.

[2] Our concern here is for John Kennedy's extension, not for Robert himself; unless clearly otherwise, "Kennedy" means "John Kennedy."

[3] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 33.

[4] Ibid., p. 52.

> The deepest feeling that most Americans have about John F. Kennedy, columnist Max Lerner has written, is the feeling that he was cut down by the assassin's bullet before he quite had a chance to show what he could do: "And because he didn't, there are many today who have a vague, uneasy feeling of guilt about it. They can no longer make it good to the former President, but they can make it good to his very able brother. It is, if you will, the politics of expiation, of atonement, not for any personal guilt but for the burden assumed by history."[1]

The politics of expiation and restoration left Johnson out. He was, as Manchester put it, "plagued by a ghost," "haunted" by images he could not control and in contrast to which he was bound to come out wanting.[2] In contrast to Robert, who handed out only memorabilia of his brother and basked in reflected glory, Johnson had aides on his trips out of Washington hand out pictures of himself and of Kennedy as a gesture of identification, but when people took ten of Kennedy's pictures to every one of his own, he had the practice discontinued.[3] "The nation itself seemed to be thinking more of the Kennedy past than of the Johnson future,"[4] and they glorified that past as an archaic Golden Age with which the profane present could hardly compete. The notion of a Golden Age of Kennedy had been proposed by a European statesman as early as the successful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis, and, despite its unrealism, it caught hold and persisted, as an exasperated Johnson aide was to complain even as late as the third year of Johnson's own administration.[5]

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[1] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 127.

[2] Ibid., p. 33; Manchester, Death, p. 626; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 190.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 626.

[4] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 208.

[5] Manchester, Death, p. 625; Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 840.

When Robert spoke, there was the sense of a glorious past and a great future but no present except one which could only be endured.[1] He was out to restore the new era that Kennedy had inaugurated with youth at its helm. Giving Kennedy a supernational character and challenging youth to "justify" his death through their action, Robert told a thousand students at Waseda University in Japan in January 1964: "John Kennedy was not only President of one nation. He was President of young people around the world. If President Kennedy's life and death are to mean anything, we young people must work harder for a better life for all people."[2] As Robert continued his Asian journey, he convinced himself that the "youth of the world was looking to him to carry on his brother's work," giving credence to Mary McGrory's subsequent charge that "Robert Kennedy thinks that American youth belong to him at the bequest of his brother."[3] In Berlin, in June 1964, commemorating his brother's visit to that city the previous year as well as memorializing his death, Robert made the hopeful restoration of the new era and his own need for it explicit:

> There were many who felt . . . that the torchbearer for a whole generation was gone; that an era was over before its time. . . . But I have come to understand that the hope President Kennedy kindled isn't dead, but alive. . . . The torch still burns, and because it does, there remains for all of us a chance to light up the tomorrows and brighten the future. For me, this is the challenge that makes life worthwhile.[4]

Given proper leadership, the idealism that had "permeated the young people all over the globe" would be reactivated, the striving for excellence would continue, and mediocrity would end. Youth would stop, he implied, turning

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[1] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 135.

[2] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 204.

[3] Ibid.; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 242.

[4] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 34.

XUM

away from their "public commitment of a few years ago to lives of disengagement and despair, turning on with drugs and turning off America."[1] For Robert Kennedy, the torch of "tough idealism" had passed, as Kennedy's Inaugural Address had proclaimed, to a new generation, once John Kennedy's and now his own to lead, and not to the aging Johnson--and millions of Americans agreed with his cause.[2] Writes White:

> Robert F. Kennedy, who loved his brother more than he loved himself, saw John F. Kennedy, even while alive, as more than a person--as the flag of a cause. His brother was for him not only the occasion of brotherly love but a new departure in American purpose. Unspoken in any conversation with Robert F. Kennedy was the feeling that the old order had passed; that it was the time of youth, the postwar breed, and now was the moment to do things. Impatient, strong-willed, he even more sharply than his brother expressed the single-minded clarity with which young people see things. Always respectful to his elders but excluding them from participation, he saw the leap between what was unpleasant reality and what must be done to set it right as the leap that must be taken at all times--and at once. For him, Lyndon Johnson was all the yesterdays; for him, Lyndon Johnson was his father's generation. And when Lyndon Johnson became President, all the yesterdays were restored. Something had been snatched from his generation and the high vision of the Kennedy administration by an assassin's bullet.
>
> There are millions of people all across the country who feel as Robert Kennedy does; for them the name of Kennedy is magic, as was the name Stuart under the Hanoverian reign of the Georges; and whenever the old and young devotants of the Kennedy loyalty gather, the Bonny Prince Charlie of the faith is Robert F. Kennedy. Like the Jacobins, they await the Restoration.[3]

Mythologically, Robert was portrayed as an exiled prince awaiting the magic sword to recapture the turrets of Camelot.[4] Especially to idealistic but disillusioned youth only recently fallen from innocence, he was the focus of romantic hopes, a "symbol of the future in a world of aging statesmen."[5] Besides the cult which kept the Kennedy mystique alive to his benefit, Robert also had allies and enemies in the world of politics itself who related to him mainly as a mythic personage; he seemed to gain allegiance (or disdain) not in his own right but by virtue of a strange kind of "hereditary charisma" as John Kennedy's successor. Writes Kimball:

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 360, citing 1968 campaign remarks.

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 3.

[3] White, Making President 1964, p. 311.

[4] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 176.

[5] Ibid., p. 85.

> Bobby is the rallying point, if not the command post, for the intrigues of the Kennedy army. . . . As the heir apparent to the office currently under the regency of Lyndon B. Johnson, Bobby moves with all the apparatus of an exiled prince: dynastic loyalty from the family, the ambitions of the former palace guard, romantic adulation from dedicated followers, poisonous hatred from rivals and opponents.[1]

According to his admirers, Robert Kennedy's use of the Kennedy myth was legitimized by his believing it himself. Liable to cry when he saw Kennedy's picture, he was "deeply, almost ferociously, dedicated to his brother's memory. . . . Too passionate and vulnerable ever to be the cool and confident operator his brother was, . . . the ultimate sincerity in Bobby was his personal commitment to his own idealization of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's Golden Age in the Presidency."[2] Robert sought not only to succeed Kennedy but also to re-incarnate him in a full restoration; he was, in Manchester's words, Kennedy's "true second self," a phrase to which Knight gives a resurrection twist by placing it after references to Caesar's spirit ranging and to Jesus' resurrection.[3] Apparently, by submerging his own identity in John's, Robert both attained a degree of self-transcendence and rationalized his own survival of his brother. Like the survivors of Hiroshima, Robert suffered what Lifton calls "survivor guilt," a feeling that if fate were fair, he should have died and the President should have lived. Like several Hiroshima survivors who dedicated the rest of their lives to working among the dispossessed, Robert also began to feel a sense of community with other victims, such as the poor and powerless. And also like them, he experienced an "immersion in death" of which Lifton wrote:

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[1] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, pp. 31, 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 76; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 3.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 120, cited by Knight, Death of J. K., p. 17.

> The embrace of the dead--may, paradoxically enough, serve as the means of maintaining life. For in the face of the burden of guilt the survivor carries with him, particularly the guilt of survival priority, his obeisance before the dead is his best means of justifying and maintaining his own existence. But it remains an existence with a long shadow cast across it, a life which, in a powerful symbolic sense, the survivor does not feel to be his own.[1]

Newfield adds:

> When Robert Kennedy finally awoke from his long night of mourning, his collar a size too lage, he began to will himself into an avatar of his martyred brother. In his public speeches he quoted his brother with an alomst morbid obsession, reminiscing and quoting his brother excessively. He started employing his brother's characteristic gesture--one hand thrust in his suit pocket, the other jabbing the air, crooked index finger extended. He began smoking the small cigars his brother favored. He began consulting his brother's circle of intellectual advisers. He let his hair grow longer. He filled his office with memorabilia of his brother. . . . And he began to wear, or sometimes just carry, a worn-out, oversized tweed overcoat (a mantle?), that was once his brother's. He often misplaced the coat leaving it behind in one town or another, but he always sent an aide back to retrieve the symbol of the past.[2]

To some reporters, Robert's Senate campaign seemed like a "replay of 1960," producing eerie feelings as they traveled on the same campaign plane, the "Caroline."[3] Robert actively promoted his role as surrogate for his assassinated brother, handing out PT 109 tie clips and copies of Kennedy's collected works or Profiles in Courage--some of which he autographed--by the bushel.[4] Yet he used his brother's memory so openly and wholeheartedly that he gave little sense of contrivance. Without fanfare, he passed out mementos "with the same matter-of-fact air that one associates with souvenir stands at religious shrines," and "the regular invocation of the late President's name in his speeches was made with no break in countenance, as if he were a pastor quoting familiar scriptures."[1] When Robert tried to account for the enormous crowds that mobbed him during his Senate campaign, running up to a million people seeing him in the first weeks, he said: "I think they look at me and see my brother. I think they feel that somehow if I am elected, things will somehow be as they were before."[2]

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[1] Robert Jay Lifton, Death in Life, cited by Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 33.

[2] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 33, 158.

[3] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 215.

[4] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 257; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 89.

Robert's metamorphosis into John Kennedy affected his character as well as his personage. Those who stereotyped Robert as a Machiavellian force behind the throne who was unfit to occupy it because he was ruthless, vindictive, etc.,[3] and most of those who wrote books about Bobby--garnered from clippings and designed to commercially explout the country's need for a legendary royal family--missed the new edges of Robert's personality forged out of the identity crisis precipitated by the Kennedy assassination. But Newfield notes them in the context of older persistent features:

> Softer personal qualities, long latent and repressed, came to the surface. He began to identify himself with a romanticized notion of what his brother stood for--peace, Negroes, the next generation. His deep, moralistic rage against evil did not change; it merely discovered new outlets. Violence and suffering replaced the old devils of Communism and corruption. The pragmatic man, who thought history could be manipulated through anticipation and hard work, learned the power of fate, and became a doubter and a skeptic.[4]

Because that of John which Bob took on was inimical to his own basic nature, he was constantly at war with himself. On the campaign trail, he would give set little speeches trying to ape his brother's cool and calculating approach only to "blow it" in the question-and-answer period by expressing his own passionate convictions.[1] "There was an impersonal quality in the public appearances of John Kennedy," Fairlie remarks, noting the differences between the two brothers; "John Kennedy was aware at all times that he stood on a conspicuous stage, the world marking his demeanor, he always took to it apparelled; even his attractive qualities were those of an attractive public figure; one gazed upon the compleat politician, accepted him as such, and did not much consider the man; one did not ask what made him tick. But everyone was always wondering what made Robert Kennedy tick."[2] Robert's complexity not only gave writers plenty of grist for their mills as they felt compelled to set him next to John Kennedy, whether by comparison or contrast,[3] but led one writer to exclaim after an interview, "God, he's not a politician! He's a character in a novel."[4] Robert's basic impulses were not only complex but contradictory. Writes Newfield:

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[1] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 134.

[2] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 213, 216.

[3] Newfield lists twenty adjectives commonly used for Bobby and argues that they constitute a case of mistaken identity; Robert Kennedy, pp. 22-23. Novak sees "ruthless" as a code word for Irish Catholic; Choosing Our King, p. 281.

[4] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 33-34.

> The rational, conservative Catholic part of his nature was juxtaposed with his brooding and rebellious Irish streak. His pragmatic, goal-oriented intellect was in opposition to his emotional, romantic instincts. His political streak, with its taste for polls and safe arithmetical majorities, was in conflict with his existential streak, which hungered for action and was trained to dare.
>
> He was an activist who thought "people should make that extra effort," and "that one person can make a difference." But at the same time he was a fatalist who knew how much of life was absurd. He radiated an animal intensity and was a sexual symbol to millions. But he was introverted and strongly Puritanical himself. The two human qualities he said he most admired were "courage and sensitivity."[5]

In taking over John Kennedy's reputation for courage and heroism, Robert added a new dimension to them. Having a mind more impressionistic, poetic, self-transcendent, and almost mystical compared to John's scholarly, disinterested intelligence, Robert had a distinctive extra dimension of myth and symbolism. It was not simply, as Fairlie contends, that the "zeal which in his brother had been concealed beneath a 'contained and ironic exterior' burned for all the world to see" in Robert. "The zeal and intelligence, the ardor and the conviction, were combined in a single frame as never before."[1] Indeed, so. Yet the result was not the same, for there was a new and moral side in Robert's "ardor and conviction" missing in John; Robert had a moral courage of historic stripe as well as John's archaic athletic courage. He was a more prophetic and progressive figure than his brothers, "the Kennedy with soul," as Fred Dutton put it.[2] Robert took risks. Having met the devil in John's death, he became a daredevil "compulsively confronting death in river rapids, mountaintops, and Amazon jungles," including walking to within twenty feet of a rhinoceros in Kenya.[3] His reputation for "guts" contributed to his appeal as a folk hero, being both in the crowd and "Above the Crowd" (his Indian name),[4] born to royalty and riches and annealed by superhuman feats of bravery, yet an object more of imitation than of envy as people identified with him as a success symbol authenticating the American dream and, far from putting him on a pedestal, mobbed him on his campaign appearances.[5] Robert was seen as a "pop or folk hero like Marlon Brando or Frank Sinatra, . . . a combination of F.D.R. and

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 281; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 201.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 350-351. Fairlie denigrates psychological speculation about character as irrelevant to political biography.

[3] For a small sampling, see A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 204-208, 216, 218, 226, 229; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 12, 17, 50, 55.

[4] Murray Kempton cited by Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 41.

[5] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 34.

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 6-7 (I deal with moral courage later).

[2] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 12, 92.

[3] Ibid., p. 42; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 64

[4] Conferred by the Seneca Nation; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 127.

[5] Kimball even asserts that the mood was "closer to worship than to envy;" Bobby Kennedy, p. 150. Cf. A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 213. For worshipful identification with one who is both as you are and as you wish to be, see Chapter I, #3.

Jimmy Dean, a public repository of dreams and fantasies, a myth who made people feel better than they were," his appeal fueled by "an atavistic craving for heroes."[1] Goldwater saw by 1966 "a religious fervor building up about this guy that is even stronger than they built up around Jack."[2] For unlike the more aloof and Olympian Jack, "the young god without wound" who did not really relish immersion in crowds, Robert added to the myth of the hero he inherited the more homely and folksy note of the non-cerebral, gutsy, all-too-human little guy fighting up in pain and sensitivity, making Mailer's portrait of the "existential hero" more applicable, says Newfield, to Robert than to John Kennedy:

> The existential hero is a man . . . central to his time, a man whose personality might suggest contradictions and mysteries which could reach into the alienated circuits of the underground, because only a hero can capture the secret imagination of a people, and be so good for the vitality of a nation. . . . A hero embodies his time and is not so very much better than his time, but he is larger than life and so is capable of giving direction to the time, able to encourage a nation to discover the deepest colors of its character . . . a man who has lived with death.[3]

As the once ebullient Sixties soured with Watts riots and the generation gap and dissent in Berkeley (which Robert hailed as a duty in a speech there in October 1966) and the quagmire of Vietnam and the general feeling of malaise in politics, people turned more to Robert Kennedy as an "anguished hero" who would lead them out of the wilderness, a "knight to redress all the ancient wrongs."[4] "Most of the people who surged around him would not have been the least surprised if he had walked upon the waters," wrote Fairlie in a christological analogy. "As he rode above them on the roofs of cars, and they reached to touch his garments, it seemed an invitation to crucifixion."[1]

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 42; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 127; White, Making President 1968, p. 188. See Chapter VII, #2D.

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 127.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 42. Newfield finds such an existential streak distinctive, but only one side of Robert Kennedy, a "small part" sometimes betrayed by caution; Fairlie's harsh criticism of Newfield's portrait is not justified though he helps to balance it; Kennedy Promise, p. 352.

[4] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 221; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, pp. 71, 128.

Robert's climb of Mount Kennedy in the Canadian Yukon in March 1965 combined memorialization, catharsis, and heroism. As an act of remembrance, Robert planted a black-bordered mourning flag with the family crest, one American and two Canadian flags, a copy of Kennedy's Inaugural Address, the John F. Kennedy Inaugural medallion, and a few PT 109 tie clasps in the "sanctified" top.[2] Climbing the mountain served as the "final catharsis" from the gloom he had been in since John's death,[3] and it liberated him to make new political conquests for himself and his brother. The physical hardship of the ritualistic climb not only proved his own endurance to himself but also made the climb a more precious trophy to his brother; as fellow climber Jim Whittaker, a conqueror of Everest, put it, "I was glad there was the last difficult part--this climb and mountain have some meaning now for President Kennedy."[4] In addition, as Joseph P. Kennedy's nurse Rita Dallas tells it, there was also a mystical sense of being closer to his brother on the mountaintop, which, she says, God had made for him:

> He chose the tallest peak he could find, one that was rugged and steep, that had never been conquered, and he conquered it. He did it to touch the clouds. Don't you realize how close he was to his brother at that moment? He was as close to heaven as a human body can get. . . .
>
> Bobby was the first to give him a monument, and no one can ever match what he did. He gave of himself. He let the greatest architect of all build his brother's monument, and none other can ever compare to it. It was God-given.[5]

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 12.

[2] Goldman, World Remembers, p. 36.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 33; A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 203. White, however, still found Robert "numb with melancholy" in early 1966; Making President 1968, p. 194.

[4] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 211.

[5] Rita Dallas, The Kennedy Case (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), p. 278. (The spatial location of heaven is interesting if irrelevant).

Robert Kennedy's descent to the more pedestrian halls of the Senate did not tarnish his image as a pop icon but legitimized it by giving him an independent national office from which to pursue his ambitions. Together with his brother Ted, who was elected at the same time in Massachusetts, the Senators Kennedy formed the nucleus of a kind of "government in exile."[1] Robert was accorded a good deal more importance than the usual freshman senator, not only by spectators in the galleries and autograph-hunters in the corridors--testifying to his special aura as a Kennedy--but also by fellow senators, who resented his insouciance toward their hallowed traditions and his news-getting ability but made attempts not to get on the wrong side of him since they knew he had an outside constituency throughout the nation and took for granted that he was a presidential possibility.[2] Nothing he did was merely local. His national prestige gave unusual significance to the election of Surrogate Judge Samuel J. Silverman, whom Robert and the Reformed Democrats backed against a candidate supported both by the regular (Tammany Hall) Democrats and the Republicans, and the press hailed Silverman's victory as a tremendous boost to Robert's prestige.[3] In the summer of 1966, Robert's popularity, both with Democrats and with voters at large, edged ahead of Johnson in the polls, and in the fall, at the height of his popularity, he campaigned for many colleagues seeking re-election though the exposure to Kennedy magic seemed to benefit Robert more than those he sought to help.[4] Time, Life, and Newsweek published cover stories on him, seventy reporters covered his journeys, and large crowds mobbed him. At most stops, there were crayoned signs, such as RFK IN '68, '72 OR ANYTIME; RFK SI, LBJ NO; RETURN TOUCH FOOTBALL TO THE WHITE HOUSE; KEEP ON HARASSING LBJ.[1] On the hustings, Robert spoke more about the accomplishments of John Kennedy than those of Lyndon Johnson, going to great lengths to retrace the steps of his brother on the way to the Presidency in 1960 and thus reminding the crowds of his past associations with destiny, and he stressed that things were getting worse, thus challenging indirectly the President's you-never-had-it-so-good theme and enhancing his own bid for restoration.[2] A Harris poll released on November 22, 1966, the third anniversary of Kennedy's death, showed that 70 per cent of the country felt that the dead President was "greater" than the living one; only 15 per cent felt Johnson was superior.[3] And, ironically, the more Johnson tried to rectify the unfair contrast by trumpeting bloated expectations of his Great Society with exaggerated rhetoric, the more he strained the people's credulity and contributed to his own decline.[4] Hardly anything Robert Kennedy did as a man or senator but was seen in the light of the Kennedy rivalry--his own and his brother's--with Johnson. The imbroglio with Manchester over the content of The Death of a President was widely seen as an attempt by Robert to have passages deleted which portrayed Johnson unfavorably and might further poison their relationship--though Robert had not read the book and may well have been simply coming to bat for Jacqueline as head of the Kennedy clan.[5] Rivalry with Johnson also under-

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[1] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 229; Manchester, Death, p. 640.

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, pp. 68-70; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 18.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 103, 168; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 106.

[4] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 185; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 30.

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 186. [2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 135.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 190.

[4] Perhaps, Johnson should have been content to concede the Kennedys' superiority in dream creation and accentuate his own greater strengths as a realistic politician.

[5] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 230; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 55. In the original version, Manchester had begun the book with a hunt scene at the LBJ ranch in which John Kennedy had declined to participate in the killing, thus indirectly suggesting a link between Johnson, Texas, and the assassination; Corry, Manchester Affair. Cf. Manchester, Death, p. 118.

XUM

mined Robert's senatorial attempts at urban legislation. In December 1966, Robert announced plans for a multi-faceted rehabilitation program for the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn utilizing the co-operation of private enterprise; though these plans progressed to fruition, when he proposed bills to get the same kind of things done in employment and housing through government sponsorship, they were killed in Senate committee by White House opposition, discredited by Presidentially appointed task forces, and replaced by Johnson-sponsored bills lest Robert steal the punch on Johnson as urban saviour.[1]

Not only the Kennedy myth and his overzealous attempts to counteract it but also increasing summer violence in the cities, excessive control and poor use of the Democratic Party machinery, and, above all, the failure in Vietnam contributed to Johnson's decline. Having promised "no wider war" in '64 and then escalating it in 1965 compounded the "credibility gap" which further separated Johnson from his subjects.[2] Although Robert Kennedy, like John, had originally supported the Vietnam war, joining the "political" rather than the "military" or "negotiations" faction and promoting counterinsurgency, he eventually broke with Johnson's conduct of the war and even with his brother's.[3] He began rather tamely suggesting a political rather than a military solution to the war including "honorable negotiations" with the Vietcong in a May 6, 1965 Senate speech. He even deleted passages from a July 9, 1965 speech suggesting that government air attacks on its own villages was no way to fight a revolutionary war, but wire services already had printed versions of the speech without deletions and spoke of a "break" with the Administration over Vietnam. In November 1965, Robert approved of college students sending blood to North Vietnamese victims of American bombings, saying, "I am willing to give blood to anyone who needs it;" Goldwater denounced this as close to treason.[1] Although Robert was increasingly critical of Johson and Rusk in private, he kept his peace about Vietnam in public throughout 1966, muting his concern lest he be accused of waging an anti-Johnson vendetta.[2] The one exception was a press conference on February 19, 1966, in which Robert, naively thinking that his words would cause no more stir than those of the twenty other senators who had taken the same position, came out for a compromise in Vietnam which involved "a share of power and responsibility for the Vietcong."[3] The New York Times gave excerpts from his speech the space and length usually given only to presidential statements.[4] When the Johnson Administration reacted with overkill--including Bundy quoting his brother to him out of context, which burned him--Robert returned to silence.[5] However, on February 1, 1967, while traveling in Europe, Robert received a peace feeler from the North Vietnamese indicating their willingness to begin real talks after bombing them stopped, a position subsequently confirmed by Premier Kosygin a week later during the annual Tet truce. When the story got out, Johnson blamed Robert for the leak, told him he never wanted to hear his views about Vietnam again, and, on February 13, 1967, he announced resumption of full-scale hostilities, including bombing.

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 105, 114.

[2] Ibid., p. 188.

[3] Ibid., pp. 19, 122-127.

On March 2, 1967, Robert finally broke with Johnson in a Senate speech proposing that we halt the bombardment and say we are ready to negotiate (the same terms as the North Vietnamese proposed though no longer viable).[1] He took this position against many of his friends and his brother's appointees who still supported and executed the war, against the advice of most of his brother's former advisors who counseled silence, and against a majority of the public who opposed a bombing halt (only 24 per cent favored it).[2] In order to soften the blow, Robert praised Johnson's efforts for peace and his restraint, but pro-Administration critics saw the speech as a domestic political skirmish, Max Ascoli accusing the Kennedy family of plotting to impose on the nation "its own Bonapartism that aims at permanent power."[3] Although Robert did not go so far as to repudiate former statements which blamed Johnson for the war and implied that Kennedy would have conducted it differently had he lived, he did take responsibility for the early course of the war on himself and his brother: "Three Presidents have taken action in Vietnam. As one who was involved in those decisions, I can testify that if fault is to be found or responsibility assessed, there is enough to go around for all--including myself."[4] Reacting to the horrors of war "with a biblical conscience" and portraying it in the images of the Apocalypse as the reign of Death and Hell, Robert added his own _mea culpa_ and suggested his countrymen do the same to the nation's general responsibility for the war:

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 131-133.

[2] Ibid., pp. 132, 138; James A. Wechsler cited by Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 147.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 137.

[4] White, Making President 1968, p. 195.

[5] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 137.

> Let us reflect for a moment not on the wisdom and the necessity of our cause, nor on the valor of the South Vietnamese, but on the horror. For although the world's imperfections may call forth acts of war, righteousness cannot obscure the agony and pain those acts bring to a single child. . . . All we say and all we do must be informed by our awareness that this horror is partly our responsibility; not just a nation's responsibility but yours and mine. It is our chemicals that scorch the children and our bombs that level the villages. We are all participants; . . . we must also feel as men the anguish of what we are doing.[5]

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[1] Newfield, _Robert Kennedy_, p. 151. [2] _Ibid._, pp. 141, 133, 146.

[3] _Ibid._, p. 152. [4] _Ibid._, p. 150. See Chapter VI, #7, above.

[5] Kimball, _Bobby Kennedy_, p. 129; Newfield, _Robert Kennedy_, p. 150; A.P., _Triumph and Tragedy_, p. 225. Cf. Revelations 6:8.

XUM

Having confessed his own guilt over Vietnam, Robert Kennedy was freer to continue his break with Johnson and, more importantly, with his own brother until in the last months of his life he publically admitted not only that his brother's war had miscarried but also that his brother was wrong from the beginning about Vietnam.[1] In August 1967, Robert attacked the South Vietnamese elections as a hoax which left no moral basis for our being in Vietnam and reduced the war to a white man's war against the Asians.[2] At first, he made no moves toward the presidency, believing the tried political wisdom that an incumbent president is invulnerable to insurrection from below because of the overweening legitimacy derived from the history of that office and the mythology about it and because of the President's consequent power; the same reasoning also inhibited the ADA, the UAW, and the NAACP from supporting Lowenstein's "dump Johnson" movement.[3] But the polls told a different story. Robert led Johnson in popularity 42/41 in September 1967, 48/39 in October, 52/32 in November, and the number of people who believed that Robert had "many of the same outstanding qualities as JFK" rose from 49 to 54 per cent from June to November. Demonstrating again the seesaw of which Newfield wrote, Harris summed up the situation reflected in the polls:

> The basic fact about Democratic politics these days is reflected in these latest survey results: whenever Lyndon Johnson's political fortunes wane, Robert Kennedy rises as a possible alternative. To a degree, Senator Kennedy is also the beneficiary of his brother. Many Americans still wonder how President Kennedy would have handled these troubled times--and Mr. Johnson tends to suffer in the comparison.[4]

Robert's star was rising, but he still didn't know what to do with himself. "Whether he willed it or not," wrote White, "a political gravity was draw-

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[1] Newfield, *Robert Kennedy*, p. 19.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 153.   [3] *Ibid*., pp. 191, 207.

[3] A.P., *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 231.

XUM

ing him into Presidential consideration--and his problem all through 1967 was to decide his own role, to measure himself."[1]

Robert Kennedy's decision-making process was complicated by the three persons at war within himself. One person was a modern pragmatist, quite "unexistentially" sizing up his chances for the presidency, which were not that good, and the effect of running on his career, a cautious self, "as circumspect as a cat," circling the decision.[2] Another person was an historic moral leader, responding to the pull of conscience on the issues and to a new constituency, which was not very powerful politically, of the young and the underprivileged. Novak highlights the conflict between these two personae in Kennedy's soul:

> Bobby Kennedy passed from being the pragmatist par excellence, the hatchet man, the tough-minded Boston Irish kid, the ruthless, dangerous influence at his brother's right hand, to being a leader of the new abolitionists, a hero of the kids of the new class, a voice of political morality in avant-garde America. How personally torn he was in the long months of 1967, between the tough pragmatism of his past and the new moral leadership he was being asked by Al Lowenstein to exert![3]

Yet there was also another person, perhaps the most powerful and surely the most crucial to the tale of the Kennedy myth: an archaic devotee, seeking to be faithful to his dead brother and continuing to be perceived as a rival to Johnson contending with him for legitimate succession to John Kennedy. In declining Lowenstein's appeal to be the first to challenge Johnson for the presidency, archaic considerations tended to outweigh the historic:

> I would have a problem if I ran first against Johnson. People would say that I was splitting the party out of ambition and envy. No one would believe that I was doing it because of how I felt about Vietnam and poor people. I think Al is doing the right thing, but I think that someone else will have to be the first to run. It can't be me

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[1] White, Making President 1968, p. 195.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 351-353; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 213.

[3] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 71.

> because of my relationship with Johnson. And his feeling toward me has more to do with my brother than me.[1]

Of course, Robert's feeling toward Johnson was also shaped more by the relationship of each toward John Kennedy than by any independent assessment of Johnson as a man or a politician. Robert was even divided on the question of whether that faithfulness to John Kennedy which was at the core of his being would be best served by running or not running for the presidency against Johnson. Like his reticence to criticize the war because it had been his brother's originally, Robert hung back from running against Johnson because that would mean running against his own brother who had chosen Johnson as his Vice President and potential successor (over his own objections).[2] Seeing Johnson as President being head of the Democratic Party, Robert also confessed that it would be hard for him as challenger to break with the party that had made his brother president.[3] But as a man with fierce loyalties to anyone who had helped his brother, it was the opposition of his brother's most intimate aides which weighed most heavily on him.[4] Their advice was cautiously pragmatic but also archaic in its underpinnings.[5] Nary a reformer among them, unlike Robert's own Senate staff, the Kennedy circle, having once been close to the power of the Presidency, were now awed by the mystique of that institution, had no reason to regain the White House except nostalgia for past glory, and were more loyal to the Kennedy

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 203-204.

[2] Ibid., p. 200; Wicker, JFK and LBJ, p. 159. Novak writes: "To challenge the leader of his own party, in the person of the man he himself had vetoed as his brother's vice president, would be to exhibit pushiness, personal ambition, and conniving;" Robert felt trapped; Choosing Our King, p. 71.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 246; A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 231.

[4] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 218; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 135.

[5] As in the Bay of Pigs discussions, Schlesinger (and Dutton) felt at a disadvantage because the talk was so narrowly political on the surface; historic concerns were again excluded; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 213.

XUM

family and the Democratic Party than to the issues; they cautioned Robert not to enter the primaries lest he damage the Kennedy name and his own future potential for upholding it by losing. Alone among the Kennedy circle, only Schlesinger suggested that Robert could wisely challenge the President, writing him a memo-- saying that his career was finished if he did not run--on the same day that Sorensen, backed by Salinger and Ted Kennedy, told him he was finished if he ran.[1] Dissuaded by the voices of the "old politics," Robert pulled back from an apparent decision to run earlier in January, announcing on January 30 that he would not oppose Johnson "under any foreseeable circumstances."[2]

Still, Robert vacillated. The Vietcong Tet offensive exposed the whole cancer of America's Vietnam policy and revealed Robert's demurrer to be a mistake as millions recoiled from Johnson and his war and flocked into the camp of Eugene McCarthy, who had subsequently taken up Lowenstein's challenge.[3] Yet the respite from rivalry with Johnson which declining to run brought him enabled Robert to give a straightforward stinging speech on Vietnam, which he delivered in Chicago on February 8, attacking the "mask of official illusion" with which we had deluded ourselves until the Vietcong offensive shattered it, pointing to our misconception of the nature of the war and to our making great losers out of the people we sought to defend, and calling again for a settlement which would give the Vietcong a "chance to participate in the political life of the country."[4] The latest polls indicated that many shared Robert's criticisms and he was heartened by them. The California poll showed Kennedy leading Johnson 42/32 (with 18 per cent for McCarthy) while the Gallup poll found only 36 per cent thinking that President Johnson was "doing a good job"--a monumental dip from the 75-80 per cent who once approved--and Harris found only a bare majority (54 per cent) supporting the Vietnam war, a drop of 20 per cent since the Tet offensive, with only 26 per cent approving of Johnson's handling of the war.[1] Robert also received support for running from his own staff and was moved by an emotional letter from a friend, who posed the Kennedy era as America's lost "historical moment," Robert as the country's reluctant saviour, and Watts--whose residents had JFK's pictures on their walls and would be ready to eschew extremist leadership for Robert but not for Johnson--as Robert's capital and obligation.[2] Finally, understanding that running and losing would be less painful than not running (a remarkable insight for a Kennedy), Robert decided in his own mind to run on March 5 and put out the word to his own camp.[3] On March 7, Kennedy gave his last Senate speech on Vietnam "without inhibitions, confessionally in moral terms, still obsessed by the suffering of innocents," crying out that victory was not ahead of us and that there was no light at the end of the tunnel and questioning our moral responsibility as the United States had tried to play God.[4] Standing by while McCarthy won twenty out of twenty-four delegates in the New Hampshire primary with 42.2 per cent of the Democratic vote on March 12, Robert tentatively announced his candidacy on March 13 by saying on television that he was reassessing the possibility of running against President Johnson.[5]

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 211, 213.

[2] Ibid., p. 223.

[3] Ibid., p. 224.

[4] Ibid., p. 226.

On March 16, Robert Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Presidency in the same Senate caucus room where John Kennedy had announced his candidacy eight years previous, using a text (written by Sorensen) which began with the exact same sentence and jabbing his finger into the air.[1] Seeking to submerge his personal stake in the campaign in a more transcendent frame, Robert asserted, a bit grandiloquently: "At stake is not simply the leadership of our party and even our country. It is the right to the moral leadership of our planet."[2] Asserting that he was running not "merely to oppose any man but to propose new policies" and reminding his listeners that whenever he had spoken about the cities or about Vietnam, it had been put in the context of a Kennedy-Johnson struggle, he explained that he had waited until McCarthy's victory in New Hampshire had demonstrated deep divisions in the Party and country before announcing lest his running for President be again construed as a personal vendetta against his rival successor.[3] Although tales of a "well-oiled Kennedy machine" were exaggerated, the "Kennedy movement," though a "romantic reality" was a real and permament force in American politics and was soon mobilized behind Robert Kennedy;[4] it was not so much a ready apparatus as a collection of people, including many of John Kennedy's inner circle (though O'Brien, Bailey, and Shriver still worked for Johnson and others had been lost to McCarthy), who were willing "to go to the wall for him," leaving all, as they had once for John Kennedy, to work for the Restoration.[5] Beginning his campaign at Kansas State University, Robert warned that America was in danger from its own misguided policies and posed the campaign as deciding what this country--which Lincoln called the "last, best hope of earth"--will stand for.

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 108, 231, 159, 187.

[2] Ibid., p. 227.

[3] Ibid., p. 231.

[4] Ibid., pp. 153-154.

[4] Ibid., pp. 239-240.

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[1] A.P. Triumph and Tragedy, p. 233; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 249.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 7.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 250-251.

[4] White, Making President 1964, p. 313 and Making President 1968, p. 187.

[5] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 233, 251, 261; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, pp. 31, 186; White, Making President 1968, p. 209. See Chapter I, #2.

Exposing the archaic logic of destroying in order to save in Vietnam, he quoted Tacitus on Rome's destruction of Carthage, "They made a desert and called it peace;" confessing his own error in helping to set us on our present path there and expressing a willingness to bear his "share of the responsibility, before history and before my fellow citizens," he quoted the historic words of Sophocles: "All men make mistakes, but a good man yields when he knows his course is wrong, and repairs the evil. The only sin is pride."[1]

Subsequently, Robert attacked President Johnson for dividing the country, for removing himself from the American tradition; and even for calling upon the darker impulses of the American spirit, seeming to suggest a political cause for all our ills and likewise a political cure.[2] But when Johnson announced a reduction of bombing in an effort to begin peace talks and his own withdrawal from presidential consideration on March 31, Robert took again, as he had once in 1967, to praising him.[3] Although Kennedy got back his organization men, Johnson's withdrawal deprived him of his target and his two great issues--the war and Johnson's record--and made him the magnet for much of the nation's free-floating venom.[4] As the war was no longer, by Robert's own admission and by Johnson's withdrawal, Johnson's alone, Eugene McCarthy quipped pungently: "Up to now Bobby was Jack running against Lyndon. Now Bobby has to run against Jack."[5]

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 229, 256, 257; A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 225.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 359-360.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 260, 267, 269.

[4] Ibid., pp. 269, 278; A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 233.

[5] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 269.

Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. Tearfully, remembering Dallas, Robert Kennedy spoke that night in the Indianapolis ghetto and the following night in Cleveland. Asserting that "no martyr's cause has ever been stilled by an assassin's bullet," he hailed King as a man who had dedicated his life to love and justice and had died for that effort. Deploring the violence of institutions and discrimination which break a man's spirit, the city which knows neither community nor justice but only fear, and the vanity of our false distinctions, Robert extolled a common faith in brotherhood which would lead men to bind up the wounds among us. Decrying the American glorification of swagger and killing, he called us to dedicate outselves "to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of the world." And abjuring hatred and distrust, he pleaded for love and compassion in the face of violence, reminding us of his own loss of his brother and quoting Aeschylus on redemption through suffering: "In our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."[1]

King's assassination, like his brother's, also altered Robert's consciousness and led him to more intensely champion the poor. The Kennedy memorabilia in Robert's office included John's doodles at his final Cabinet meeting with the word "poverty" circled six times--which may have been the start of Robert's preoccupation.[2] Visiting a migrant farm camp in September 1967 and seeing black children there with scabs, flies, and bloody noses in a reeking bus, his hand and head had trembled with rage "like a man going through an exorcism or religious experience."[3] But it was only after Kihg's death and during his final campaign that Robert glimpsed the deeper roots of America's internal disease and imagined himself as a possible healer of it, seeing himself as voice for the voiceless, liked for himself and not for his brother, his career no longer the private property of the Kennedy family but belonging to the dispossessed.[1] Robert took on "a personal identification with the victims and casualties of American society unique among American politicians."[2] Moving beyond the law-and-order campaign Kennedy's men had realistically prepared for him in Indiana, Robert bespoke also his own caring in question-and-answer periods, including litanies about the poor in at least two out of every five speeches. He disturbed comfortable college students by comparing them to minority youth and challenged them to choose the way of responsibility and participation rather than the way of the country club or pubs, quoting Camus to them, "Perhaps, we cannot prevent this world from being a world in which children are tortured, but we can reduce the number of tortured children," and adding, "And if you don't help us, who else in the world can help us do this?"[3]

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 271-275. (Tillich agrees).

[2] Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 76.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 90.

In his Indiana campaign, Robert drew crowds such as would normally turn out in late October or November. He had special appeal to the young and the blacks. Seeing him as "The Kennedy, of the Family and Blood Royal, The Prince Coming to Town" combined with Robin Hood and the Pied Piper as well, children, especially, flocked to his motorcades.[4] To blacks, he was a Liberator and saint who sent them into a "sighing, near-sexual orgy of exultation" as they shouted his name.[5] Yet Robert was seen as a champion of lower middle-class ethnic whites as well as blacks and young, based not only on sentiment but on concrete modern promises to serve their interests. Writes Novak:

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 32, 275.

[2] White, Making President 1968, p. 191.

[3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 282; Kimball, Bobby Kennedy, p. 88; A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 233.

[4] White, Making President 1968, p. 215.

[5] Ibid.

> The very qualities that made liberal critics unhappy with Kennedy's campaign in Indiana--his tough, law-and-order outreach to the white working class, the confidence placed in him by both black and white workers in Gary and Hammond--assured them that he could do the most important job in American politics: heal the division between black and white workers by conceiving of politics as a coalition to help both simultaneously. Bobby Kennedy didn't ask them to love one another. He simply asked them to work for what both equally needed: jobs, houses, opportunity--and not at each other's expense.[1]

Still wondering whether the people of Indiana saw himself or his brother in him, Robert Kennedy carried Indiana on May 2 with 42 per cent of the vote and went on to win over Humphrey and McCarthy in Nebraska, to win over Humphrey in South Dakota, and to lose to McCarthy in Oregon.[2] Emancipated by defeat from the pressures of unlimited winning--so that he said that "the issues are more important than me now"--and speaking from the heart rather posing as the "elegant, cool John F. Kennedy as America remembered him," Robert Kennedy went on to win in California on his own, without quoting his brother or leaning on his legend.[3]

Both as a man and as a political figure, Robert Francis Kennedy was a very complex phenomenon, full of contradictions and possibilities, a "strange, incongruous blend" of a modern pragmatist, an historic moralist, and an archaic hero. In this one Robert, there were three personae, whom we shall call "Bobby" and "Francis" and "Kennedy." As "Bobby," he was the younger brother, the hatchet man, the shrewd politician, a power broker who knew his way around the political jungle, tough and realistic--

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 194.

[2] White, Making President 1968, pp. 217, 221.

[3] Ibid., p. 222; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 20, 299.

and this "old Bobby" was never absent from the mix. As "Francis"--and there was something like St. Francis in his sensitivity--there was passionate concern for the world's ills and a growing feeling that he could give himself to ameliorating them, rooted in his religious upbringing, to which he took much more than John, and spurred more by tragic experience than by abstract schemes for world-improvement.[1] As "Kennedy," he was the next in line, the head of the clan, a devotee and avatar of his brother; this persona was at the core of the popular view of him and of his own self-definition but it was never exhaustive of him. For "Bobby" never fully gave in to "Kennedy," and "Francis" moderated "Bobby" to "grasp the evils, ambiguities and conflicts of interest involved in politics . . . and to give them the most moral shape he could;"[2] and "Francis" also developed the "Kennedy" he represented in an historic direction.

Both by fate and by wish, Robert's basic persona was that of "Kennedy," the archaic hero. His unlimited devotion to his brother was archaic both while John lived and even more when it was reconstituted after John's death in Robert's attempt to become his avatar. The attempt to revive a global presidency was archaic as was his pretension to the moral leadership of the planet and his mission to save the world, improperly enlarging the scope of politics as if it were source of all ills and could be a cure-all, reminiscent of John Kennedy's grandiose "politics of expectation" though to a somewhat different purpose.[3] Robert's notion of the Kennedy years as a Golden Age, the attempt at a Restoration of a new era, the promise of a magic end to mediocrity was archaic as was the public's attraction to the dynastic hereditary charisma of their Bonny Prince Charlie. The whole notion of repetition, the re-presentation of Kennedy's words like familiar scripture and of mementoes like relics at a religious shrine, the attempt to make up for past tragedy through a politics of expiation and atonement was archaic, and Robert's daredevil streak, flirting with death as if to join his brother in the death which should have been his own instead, was a dangerous aberration, as Fairlie notes.[1] Unlike a "Puritan activism," which holds idleness to be a sin before God and work as an ethical duty to be pursued for historic (or later, modern) goals, Robert exhibited more of an "existential activism, practiced in order to externalize and identify the self and to fortify moral integrity."[2] It was risk for risk's sake, pure zeal leaving no time for reflection, an intensification of John Kennedy's own archaic fortitude which would justify Fairlie's assimilation of Robert to John at this point were it not for Robert's exhibition of a Puritan activism and less strenuous but more exacting moral courage (absent from John) at other points. Still, Robert's "existentialism" and vitality did reach the alienated circuits of America's psychic underground, and we must note its power even if we see it as archaic or "improper."[3] As an atavistic existential-pop-folk hero, the "Kennedy" in Robert was regarded almost as a Christ figure, and there were, again, some who left all to follow him.

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[1] Robert "believed in God, and in no ideology," writes Newfield; He attended a Benedictine-run prep school and considered the priesthood; "He's the Christian among the brothers, the one who is the believer," said Richard Goodwin; Robert Kennedy, pp. 44, 48, 45. Cf. Chapter I, #3.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 195.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 7, 350.

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[1] Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, pp. 351-353.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 184 (citing Alan Sandison analyzing John Buchan). For the puritan side of Robert, which was also strong, see Newfield, *Robert Kennedy*, pp. 47-49. For the shift in Puritanism from godly salvation to business success, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

[3] Novak argues strongly for this recognition and dismisses Fairlie's dismissal of it as British skepticism toward the Celtic; *Choosing Our King*, p. 141.

XUM

Yet Robert Kennedy was not content merely to be an archaic hero. The old modern pragmatic "Bobby" was still part of his make-up. Robert's modernism, as Newfield noted, had been severely shaken by Kennedy's death. As Reinhold Niebuhr so often observed, modern illusions of a completely malleable world gave way not to a realistic historic sense of limited power in a given world but to an archaic fatalistic notion of a world beyond human shaping in Robert's immediate response to his brother's death.[1] Yet Robert's pragmatism reasserted itself not in harmony with his archaic self but in conflict with it: his rational, conservative, Catholic side against his brooding, rebellious, Irish side; his pragmatic, goal-oriented intellect against his emotional, romantic instincts; his political streak against his existentialist streak, as Newfield told us.[2] Although he had an archaic need to consult his brother's advisers as an oracle that would inform him of his brother's wishes from beyond the grave, he was not satisfied with the easy amalgam of unconscious archaism and conscious modernism with which they presented him. Against an archaism which would protect his career and a modernism which did not count his chance of winning as very great, Robert took the historic risk of running for the presidency because he cared for those who suffered in Vietnam and in America. He had not given up on counting votes; on the last night of his life, he spoke of "the politics of reality." His primary campaigns thus far had been full of heroism and compassion (as well as some bread-and-butter issues); he knew that he would have to wage a different kind of campaign to win among the kingmakers at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and perhaps a different kind yet to win the November election--and he knew it

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[1] In Seduction of the Spirit, Harvey Cox deals with this as an alternation between Promethean and Epimethean attitudes.

[2] In this scheme, Robert's historic side is melded with his modern.

XUM

would be very tough.[1] Robert still wanted to win, but that was not all he wanted; he had broken free of the Kennedy mold in which the archaic goal is winning and modern pragmatism merely provides means to that end.

There had always been an historic edge to Robert's personality, a bit of "Francis" in him. As Attorney General, he had pursued the cause of civil rights with a kind of puritan zeal though with limited sensitivity to black consciousness and restrained by his brother's desire not to overly alienate the South. As a senator, he was frustrated by the way in which his urban bills had been scuttled as a casualty of his archaic rivalry with President Johnson not only because he had been outskirmished but also because he had been prevented from doing what he wanted to help people. Not only because he sought a restoration of the Kennedy era but also because he felt the pull of his special constituency of poor and blacks, Robert had gone against his better judgment and that of his advisers in throwing his hat in the ring. The Boston Catholic realism in which he had been reared, which told him that you must first make sure you are going to win and then use your power for moral ends, was being tested and stretched as Robert reluctantly held back and then responded in the possibly lost cause of the young "abolitionists" incensed by Vietnam.[2]

Ironically, it was out of his archaic attachment to Kennedy that Robert's historic concerns grew. For he had a romanticized notion of what his brother stood for--peace, Negroes, the next generation--and he committed himself to these things. His identification with his brother's death gave him a sense of community with victims, especially with the poor and the powerless, and a sense of his life not being his own which enhanced his capacity for self-giving. His moralistic rage against evil did not merely change its targets from the demons of Communism and corruption to the agonies of violence and suffering but was given a touch of historic moderation as experience tempered his judgment and as he learned to "ration his rage" against injustice. There was certainly an element of evangelism and moral revival in Robert's campaign, as Fairlie points out, verging on the archaic, but if it was not merely an excrescence of emotion but a directing of feeling toward historic and modern ends, why complain? It was, after all, very American.[1] There was a visceral quality about Robert Kennedy, and "he did

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[1] Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 194; Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 358.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 71-72.

react to poverty as he saw it rather than to any notion of equality as he conceived it," reflecting among alternative modes of historic civil religion Robert's proximity to the Catholic stream, which tends to react immediately and specifically to evil, rather than to the republican stream, which approaches it remotely and generally.[2] Robert did have a very "unpolitical communion" with the poor and blacks and often communicated his intentions by symbolic gestures, but--unless Fairlie is accusing him of insincerity and hypocrisy (which may have fit John Kennedy in his promises)--I see no reason to doubt that Robert would have delivered in more concrete ways; I do not believe that his seeking to be a "voice for the voiceless" was an attempt to substitute himself for, or avoid dealing with, the leaders of the poor and blacks--Stokely Carmichael, who wished to make deals with other candidates, certainly was not seen as a prime leader in the ghetto where I lived--but rather I see it as an attempt to deal the disenfranchised into the political system while they were developing their own political leadership and clout.[2] Even Robert's claim to the "moral leadership of the planet," which sounds so much like John Kennedy's claim that the future of civilization was a stake in his election, can be given an historic interpretation. It was the unquestioned right to the moral leadership of the planet that America has always assumed which had helped to get us into Vietnam--with no little help from John Kennedy's sabre-rattling rhetoric about defending freedom anywhere--but the tone of Robert's campaign was very different; it is at least possible that Robert was questioning any inherent right to American moral leadership of the world, suggesting that it was conditional, depended on a righteous use of our power, and was in danger of forfeiture through our continued involvement in the Vietnam war, which he attacked. Identification with Kennedy and other victims, moralistic rage, revivalism, immediate reactions, communion, symbolism, and messianism were all powerfully involved in Robert's campaign for the presidency, putting him in touch with the more primitive side of human nature and running a greater risk of archaism but largely directed, I believe, by historic purposes.

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[1] Fairlie contends that Americans, not believing in compromise, tend either to sweep issues under the rug or to transcend them in moral revival; Kennedy Promise, p. 358. Yet transcendent concern can lead to grappling with issues. For the contribution of revivalism to abolitionism, see Bellah, Broken Covenant, pp. 44-52.

[2] In A Theology for Radical Politics, Novak contrasts a Mediterranean type favoring immediate rebellion (typified by Camus) and a Teutonic type favoring abstract revolution. Shaw favors socialism in Major Barbara.

Until it became a non-issue among remaining Democratic contenders after Johnson's withdrawal, the Vietnam war provided Robert Kennedy with his most historic issue. He was not "right from the start" on Vietnam but he did come out against the war as early as March 1967 when it was still politically risky to do so and in a way that involved his own painful admission of guilt and even more painful repudiation of his brother's policy. Unlike the archaism which can never admit failure or the moralism which often in the name of Christ commits the sin of self-righteousness

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[1] Cf. Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 354-357.

XUM

which he deplored most, Robert confessed his sin and, in Sophocles' words, sought "to repair the evil." He rejected the whole notion of holy war and trying to play God but did not switch to opposition to all wars, acknowledging, like the Catholic "just war" position, that some wars are necessary in an imperfect world without denying the pain that righteousness sees in them. Articulating the saying of Camus which he had framed on his desk, "I should like to be able to love my country and still love justice," Robert affirmed not an archaic unlimited love of country but an historic conditional love of country directed by transcendent ideals, saying in a speech against our Vietnam involvement, "When we say we love our country, we say it for what it can be and for the justice it stands for."[1] At his best and always with unreconciled tensions, Robert Francis Kennedy exhibited historic commitments developed from an archaic basis implemented by modern means.

VII

On June 5, 1968 at 12:16 A.M., Senator Robert Kennedy was shot to death in a corridor of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. He was shot in the head "near the spot where his brother's lethal wound occurred," standing not far from a sign which read "The Once and Future King."[2] Squeals of victory changed into shrieks of grief: "Oh, God! It's happened again. It can't be! Not again! No, God, no."[3] But "it had happened twice, so identically twice," wrote the Associated Press in its memorial book for both Kennedys Triumph and Tragedy:

> A transcontinental flight bearing a body high above America towards home. A common forklift, sputtering up towards the great body of a jet, lifting its humble steel hands upward almost as if in prayer to receive a coffin and bear it, and those great and small who carried it, back to

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 62.

[2] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 241-242; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 332.

[3] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 242; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 329.

> the earth. The mourners filing out. Some new. Some not. Some who had made this awful passage home before. Eventide again and the lights prying the dark to glare on personal tragedy that was, however, also the people's.[1]

Popular reaction to Robert's death was much as it was for John Kennedy. An October 1968 survey of reactions to six assassinations during the Sixties consistently found intensity of reaction on various scales decreasing from John Kennedy to Robert Kennedy to Martin Luther King to Medgar Evers to Malcolm X to George Lincoln Rockwell--with the two Kennedys often clustered together, King and Evers together, and Malcolm and Rockwell (for once) together. Almost as many Americans were saddened by Robert's death as by John's (91/95 per cent) while 86 per cent were shocked (versus 94 per cent for John), 74 per cent felt at a loss (vs. 87 per cent), 68 per cent felt hopeless (vs. 78 per cent), 58 per cent felt angry (vs. 75%), and 45 per cent felt afraid (vs. 61%). As with John Kennedy's death, Negroes tended to react more strongly to Robert's death--feeling more sad, hopeless, and at a loss than any other subgroup--though Negro reaction to King's death often matched or exceeded reaction to Robert's and often came close to John's. In New York City, the disparity between blacks and middle-class whites was even more striking. According to a survey published in New York magazine, 92 per cent of Harlem residents said Robert's death affected them as much or more than John's while only 28 per cent of the Upper East Side whites interviewed shared that reaction, and they also visited Robert Kennedy's coffin less (8 per cent of Upper East Side whites compared to 52 per cent of Harlem residents interviewed).[2]

The second Kennedy assassination spurred some to try to rectify the world. When Sirhan Sirhan was grabbed after Robert was shot, Jess

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[1] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 244.

[2] Kirkham, Assassination, pp. 94-107; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 82.

Unruh jumped on a table and shouted, "Don't kill him! If the system works at all, we're going to try this one," perhaps mirroring a stronger sentiment in 1968 in favor of regular justice rather than retribution.[1] "The civilized Western response" to this assassination and its predecessors, according to Sellers, was a move to make America less violent and thus prevent further assassinations through gun control.[2] Robert Kennedy had, indeed, spoken out aginst the American glorification of Killing and had sponsored gun control legislation as a senator, making it "an entirely fitting response to his memory," but, even though a Gallup poll shortly after Robert's assassination showed 80 per cent in favor of gun control, very little has been accomplished either in gun control or in the lessening of violence.[3]

Although there were some cases of rededication--e.g., multimillionaire Howard Willens joined the anti-war cause in response to his son's grieving over John Kennedy's death and to his daughter's more intense grief over Robert's, and Jess Unruh claimed to regain a sense of high-risk politics, jettisoning his seedy side for an earlier idealism[4]--there was much more of a a sense of "America the Incorrigible" at the end of this cycle of assassinations than there had been at the beginning. Grief over the Kennedy assassination had been more intense (because a President was involved) but recovery was swift and often included a resolve to keep the country moving in line with Kennedy's spirit; Robert's death felt more like a slow burn. Folks felt that they could learn something from John's death, do better, etc., but "What had the people not learned from the first," ask

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[1] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 242; Kirkham, Assassination, p. 114; Time, September 14, 1970, p. 18.

[2] Sellers, Public Ethics, pp. 15-17.

[3] Manchester, Death, p. 63; Kirkham, Assassination, p. 117.

[4] Time, September 21, p. 61 and September 14, p. 18 (1970).

XUM

the authors of Triumph and Tragedy, "that they must look on a second?"[1] The early Sixties welcomed a little controversy and disturbance; the late Sixties had more of tumult than we could handle. John's death was experienced as a threat to the order of society which we could overcome; Robert's death was experienced as the collapse of the political order, which all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put together again. When John Kennedy was killed, millions fell from innocence, yet we thought it exceptional; after assassinations kept happening, faith in America the Innocent, believing in divine sanction for its manifest destiny, was shattered and replaced by a new common faith. "In a day of national trauma, such as that which followed the great assassinations of 1963-1968, there is invoked another form of national commonality: collective guilt or a national tendency to violence," wrote Sellers.[2] "Fuck this country, fuck this country!" screamed a college student when Robert was shot, and a television station ran a single word for two and a half hours--SHAME.[3] It was not just that another hero was dead, but that all our heroes had been killed. "God, they kill our leaders and they kill our friends," said Chalres Evers right after Robert Kennedy's death, and, the feeling persisting, a University of California student said in 1970: "Look what happened to John F. Kennedy or Bobby Kennedy or Martin Luther King or Medgar Evers. Every time the kids in this country found somebody they could love and trust, they were killed."[4] Singing successively of Lincoln, the two Kennedys, and Martin Luther King in "Abraham, Martin, and John," Dion paid sad tribute:

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[1] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 244.

[2] Sellers, Public Ethics, p. 31.

[3] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 244; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 330.

[4] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 331; San Francisco Chronicle, September 18, 1970, p. 8.

"They freed lot of people, but the good they die young, Abraham, Martin, and John." Highlighting the despair of the Kennedy generation that had been hardest hit by John Kennedy's and now again by Robert's, Newfield wrote:

> Now I realized what makes our generation unique, what defines us apart from those who came before the hopeful winter of 1961, and those who came after the murderous spring of 1968. We are the first generation that learned from experience, in our innocent twenties, that things were not really getting better, that we shall not overcome. We felt, by the time we reached thirty, that we had already glimpsed the most compassionate leaders our nation could produce, and they had all been assassinated. And from this time forward, things would get worse: our best political leaders were part of memory now, not hope. The stone was at the bottom of the hill and we were alone.[1]

In the face of this mood, it was all the more necessary that some ceremonialization of Robert Kennedy's death attenuate the gloom even though it might also lose some of its potency by being a "re-run." This time the funeral was simply a church funeral (though stacked with high-ranking prelates) and not a military-ecclesial state funeral, and it was not televised, so a larger burden fell on television to provide not only a wake leading up to the funeral but the equivalent of a religious service itself, which culminated the day after the funeral and burial. James Sellers portrayed not only some of the details of this ritual but also its "ritual-symbolic, crypto-theological, pre-activist" character and its therapeutic function:

> As if a crisis plan had already been programmed, the national electronic media began to rehearse what had become a tradition of penance, adjustment, and compensation. Its primary medium was television and its ritual had evolved out of the earlier murders, also by gunshot, of President John F. Kennedy and of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. Essentially, the process consisted of the deliberate repetition of the facts and details of the traumatic event, and of pondering its meaning by a variety of seers, sages, celebrants, and exorcists from the several estates of government, mass communication, and church. (Business, the first estate in this country, furnished comparatively few spokesmen, but that may be because nobility commonly leaves the functions of priesthood to a separate class.)
>
> More than a ghoulish electronic wake, the television coverage of

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 334-335.

> this latest tragedy finally assumed all the proportions of a public religious exercise. The Ed Sullivan Show . . . cancelled its regularly scheduled program following Senator Kennedy's death and substituted a memorial--virtually a memorial service celebrated in the chin-out, "sock 'em" style of the entertainment business. The program was made up of taped excerpts from previously presented shows: The West Point choir sang "God Bless America." Charlton Heston, an actor who had both played Abraham Lincoln and starred in a famed biblical movie, recited Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, with its somber tones of divine judgment upon this country. Miss Kate Smith sang "The Lord's Prayer."
>
> When a community is thunderstruck with a deed such as this, the slaying of a prince who might be king, its first response is to take defensive measures against the crisis at an elemental, prerational level. In tribal societies the normative resort is to propitiate the gods who must have sent the calamity, and we can hardly deny some carry-over of this kind of reaction was implicit in the national television ritual. . . .
>
> The television ritual, culminating in the Ed Sullivan memorial, did make just this appeal to religious and patriotic sanctions against further psychic loss to the crisis. . . . It was aimed at arrest of damage. It sought to reverse psychic loss, restore resolve, renew condition of being and hoped-for being.[1]

The funeral itself also had elements of national civil religion in it--with Andy Williams singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"--and elements of culture with which the Kennedys were associated--with Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in selections from Mahler's Fifth Symphony. Cardinal Cushing, devastated by the Kennedys' tragedies but praising Rose for having more confidence in Almighty God than any priest he knew, presided at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, again praying for angels to take Robert into paradise.[2] Like the eulogy by Jacob Javits, which spoke of Robert as a man who "endured personal torture, . . . literally shook with indignation at the sight of starving children," Edward Kennedy portrayed his brother as a man of compassion and also of hope in a simple eulogy:

> My brother need not be idealized or enlarged in death beyond what he was in life, to be remembered simply as a good and decent man who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it,

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[1] Sellers, Public Ethics, pp. 15-17.

[2] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, pp. 243, 250; Time, September 21, 1970, p. 61.

> saw war and tried to stop it. . . . As he said many times, in many parts of this nation, to those he touched and who sought to touch him: "Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not."[1]

A funeral train bore Robert from New York to Washington. Here and there a band gathered on a station platform to play "America the Beautiful" or the "Battle Hymn," and by Baltimore as the train neared the crowd sang without accompaniment the "Battle Hymn"--with its posing of dying to make men free as the political equivalent of Christ's dying to make men holy.[2] In many places, blacks and whites lined up on opposite sides of the tracks, mourning the loss of, perhaps, the last man who could unite them for some time, "the last liberal politician who could communicate with white working-class Americans," who had felt that Robert cared about them, but were now drifting, some of them, into the Wallace camp.[3] For "ironically," wrote Time magazine, "Robert Kennedy had the allegiance of much of Middle America along with his constituency of blacks and young. Whatever their politics, both Kennedys had an idealism about America, a pride about it to which Middle Americans responded because they shared it."[4]

Debarking at Washinton's Union Station, a cortege was formed and wound its way past the Justice Department and the White House, where Robert had served with John Kennedy, and past Resurrection City, symbol of the newer world he sought, to Arlington. With children holding candles aloft in the darkness, a graveside ceremony was conducted, the flag was handed to his widow without taps being played, and Robert Francis Kennedy was laid to rest beside the brother he had loved, worked with, survived, reincarnated, and willed to succeed.

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[1] A.P., Triumph and Tragedy, p. 250; Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 51.

[2] See Chapter VIII, #5, above. [3] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, pp. 91, 92.

[4] Time, January 5, 1970, p. 11.

The sense of repetition in the death and burial of Robert Kennedy was tremendous: the shot in the head, the tears, the television ritual designed to stem psychic loss at an elementary level, the archaic propitiation of the gods, the historic sense of guilt, the modern attempt to pick up the pieces. Memorialization was again the high point of the following Democratic National Convention. With all the commotion on the streets of Chicago as young radicals--bereft of a viable candidate and disappointed by unresponsiveness to their pleas to end the Vietnam war[1]--battled "rioting" police and with all the pallor in the tightly secured convention, Robert Kennedy, claimed Newfield, was "the most alive candidate at the Democratic convention,"[2] making his appearance as John had four years ago in a memorial film. Ted Kennedy's voice, on tape, introduced the film, saying: "If my brother's life and death had one meaning above all others, it was this: that we should not hate but love one another, that our strength should not be used to create the conditions of oppression that lead to violence but the conditions of justice that lead to peace."[3] The thirty-two-minute film spanned the sixteen years of Robert's public service, showing his working with Kennedy as Attorney General, his climbing Mount Kennedy, his last campaign in which he had challenged the country to stand not for violence and lawlessness but for generosity, compassion, love, and peace. The sense of repetition was heightened by the inclusion of scenes from John Kennedy's funeral and of Robert introducing the Kennedy memorial film at the 1964 convention with Shakespearean lines, a rerun of a rerun. Again, there was lasting applause, but this time the mood was more bitter, and, when the chairman tried to gavel it away, it turned into a deliberate protest and then into a shouting match between Daley's defenders and Kennedy partisans. The Democrats went on from a desultory convention to a resounding defeat in November as Richard Nixon, with no claims to be a successor to John Kennedy, ascended to the Presidency. Seeking not to carry on the unfinished agenda of the Sixties but dismissing its turmoil as a nightmare, Nixon promised to lead us forward along the very different contours of his own "driving dream:"

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[1] Fairlie believes that the resort to the streets was encouraged by the Kennedy political method which had been theatrical as it sought to circumvent the political process through personal leadership; Kennedy Promise, pp. 15, 319, 344, 358, etc. While there is some truth here, I think a larger truth is that the Kennedys attracted people into politics who were not used to the regular political channels which had not served them well heretofore, who grew easily impatient with their slowness, and who were greatly disappointed when their allies within the system were taken from them, ending up in the streets not simply for publicity but as a last resort.

[2] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 322.

[3] Jules Witcover, Eighty-five Days: The Last Campaign of Robert Kennedy (New York: Ace Publishing Corporation, 1969), p. 326.

> In these troubled years just past, America has been going through a long nightmare of war and division, of crime and inflation. Even more deeply we have gone through a long, dark night of the American spirit. But now that night is ending. Now we must let our spirits soar again. Now we are ready for the life of a driving dream.[1]

Though it would suffer even more at his hands through the Watergate scandal, belief in America the Innocent, which had never suffered defeat in its history, was again restored by Nixon; the somber historic sense of divine judgment which had attended Robert's demise was swept away; and Robert Kennedy, not so much enlarged in death as John had been, was quietly laid to rest, as a rerun, within the annals of our fallen heroes.

Fairlie tells us that, "as in the case of his brother, Robert Kennedy became a different political figure as the result of his assassination; the candidate when he was alive was less powerful than his shade at once became."[2] Perhaps, so. Yet his shade was no longer his own, and what it gained in power he lost in distinctiveness. Robert Kennedy's death spelled the end of the Kennedy myth as a potent political force and fused John-and-Robert's remains into a single crypt. The trend at the end of Robert's life to rely less on his brother's legend was now reversed again and his programmatic thrust was eclipsed. John Kennedy's mythic charisma, which had been largely channeled through Robert, especially since Johnson's withdrawal, was spent, and Robert never gained the authority to command which might carry beyond his death. The battle for succession having ended with Johnson a lame duck and Robert a dead duck, there was now a sense of there being no successor. Much more than after John's death there was a sense of no one left to carry on, and the Kennedy legacy became, as Newfield put it, "a memory, not a hope," not so much a mandate for the future even in terms of restoration as a residue of the past (or, as pieced together by Sorensen, a jumble of platitudes masquering as principles with no political dynamism).[1] Although the public did not know the difference, the die-hard supporters of Robert Kennedy in his last campaign had developed a cult quite separate from the old John Kennedy clique and were not ready for any centrist coalition. Stuck in the doldrums, they did not talk of trying to "put it together again" under someone else, not even Ted Kennedy, whose candidacy they feared would invite a third Kennedy assassination.[2] Unlike the passing of the mantle to Johnson institutionally and to Robert charismatically following the Kennedy assassination, there was no succession but only the "dropping out" of a candidate and of many of his supporters.

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[1] San Francisco Chronicle, January 23, 1971, p. 6.

[2] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 350.

Unlike John Kennedy, Robert held no office which supplied an automatic institutional successor but was killed in an attempt at presidential nomination, leaving the field to other contenders who did not include John's institutional successor either.[1] Unlike Robert Kennedy, Ted Kennedy was not an integral part of John Kennedy's presidential government nor was he Robert Kennedy's Number 2 man, and he did not go through the same kind of trauma and metamorphosis over the death of either brother which might have justified his being seen, even in the absence of close collaboration, as carrying on a shared personal charisma; furthermore, when such charisma is attributed to him, Ted becomes "ensnared in an idealized image of his brothers," a captive of the moralism of the Left without the underpinnings of tough power politics, appealing to the white lower middle class, which continued to be part of the style of Robert (and John) even as they moved left.[2] All that was left for Ted was dynastic succession, and that was not enough by itself to guarantee presidential nomination and election nor was Ted willing to rely on it exclusively.[3] Ted both affirmed and denied the dynastic succession myth. In his first public speech after Robert's death, just a few days before the Democratic National Convention, Ted said, "Like my three brothers before me, I pick up a fallen standard," but then went on to re-assert his unavailability for national office in 1968,[4] continuing to decline even in the face of a "draft-Ted" movement led by Unruh and Daley because he "didn't want to move on a wave of sympathy" for his brother.[5]

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[1] For three reviews panning Sorensen's Kennedy Legacy, see Book Review Digest, p. 1237.

[2] Witcover, Eighty-five Days, pp. 320, 322.

Any hopes for a Democratic restoration through Ted Kennedy were drowned, at least temporarily, by an accident at Chappiquidick pond on Martha's Vineyard in July 1969, which was fatal to Ted's female companion and left him no credible explanation for his indefensible behaviour. This incident, coupled with related whisperings that he lacks dedication and likes to be around pretty girls and tall drinks too much, was the albatross around Ted's neck, confirming that he "was not Jack or Bob" and could no longer rely on that identification. Yet Chappaquidick may have been less Ted's death as a viable politician than his "baptism," shearing him of reliance on the Kennedy myth and making him emerge as a figure in his own right, who, in his own words, "maybe would like to do it (seek the presidency) later on, in a different climate, and on my own."[1] Indeed, so. Mythic trappings continue to attend Ted Kennedy: he receives twice as much mail as any other senator, much of it non-political, and more death threats than anyone but the president; when he campaigns, "epiphanies of the old Kennedy magic" are perceived as crowds seek to touch the heir apparent.[2] Despite his continual demurring, "as the last male family member of his generation, Edward Moore Kennedy in some minds will always be marked out for the presidency--whether he is running or not."[3] Yet time has dimmed the old passions: whatever his own merits--and they certainly seem worth assessing, especially in comparison with other contenders for the Democratic nomination--Ted Kennedy's claims to the presidency as successor to the successor to John Kennedy seem, on that basis alone, to be very slight.

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[1] George McGovern ended up as stand-in for Robert Kennedy at the convention but fared poorly; in 1972, he won the Democratic nomination but lost the November election by landslide proportions.

[2] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 91-92, 67.

[3] Warren Rogers figures Ted could have won the Democratic nomination but would have been clobbered by Nixon in the election; "Kennedy's Comeback: Will he or won't he?" Life, August 10, 1971, p. 20.

[4] Witcover, Eighty-five Days, p. 323.

[5] Ibid., p. 325.

Without an immediate successor of his own to write the next chapter, Robert Kennedy's death and its aftermath completes the Kennedy myth--at least for now. Camelot was over. While the presidency itself is always hedged with myth, taking on especially vivid colors while John Kennedy presided, the Kennedy myth only attained full bloom from Kennedy's death to Robert's death, after which it would be forever wilted like a pressed flower in a scrapbook.[1] The impulse to restore the Golden Age of Kennedy, symbolized by Camelot, was no longer an active dream, and even the dream has become tarnished as revisionist historians and political journalists have helped the gilt to peel from the ruins. Though still intact for millions, the Kennedy myth has become broken for others, as it ought to be, and has been dismissed by still others. Whatever its status--and even if an appendix is added--the body of the Kennedy myth is a thing of the past, affording us an opportunity to re-examine it with greater detachment. Though Witcover calls it a premature epitaph, I think the usually jovial Dick Tuck was essentially realistic when he said:

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[1] Rogers, "Kennedy's Comeback," p. 20.

[2] _Time_, November 29, 1971, p. 16 and November 15, 1973, p. 19.

[3] "Teddy: Running or Not?" _Time_, April 7, 1975, p. 51.

> Camelot is ended. It began in violence and ended in violence. It began with John Kennedy's death, not before, and it ended with Bob Kennedy's assassination. It will never exist again, whether Teddy gets to be President or not.[2]

Fairlie, however, sees a future for the Kennedy myth, not merely as a story, but, because of its essentially incomplete character, as a source of continuing political temptation:

> The Kennedys are legendary figures, and their names will be sung as long as men tell stories to each other about their past. The legend is today being questioned, but it is likely to remain the source of a powerful mythology--if for no other reason than that the lives of the two brothers were cut short. Both the Unfinished Presidency of the one and the Unachieved Presidency of the other may tempt the American people to believe that, just as this country was deprived of two unusual chances for salvation in the past, so their best hope in the future, as trials beset them, is to find and to follow another deliverer.[3]

In conclusion, we will want to analyze and evaluate the Kennedy myth summarily as part of the larger continuing heritage of American civil religion.

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[1] Such was the mood at Robert's death; the flower may bloom again.

[2] Witcover, Eighty-five Days, p. 320.

[3] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 1-2.

CONCLUSION

But the witless prayers of children in the dark
        must ebb into silence.
The eunuchs of Rome and New York must burn their robes.
The violent and guilty boyhood of nations
        carrying rifles and crosses
        must end and be forgotten.

All the sacred emblems
        of religious awe, of tribal arrogance
        that have killed you
        must be laid down:
        the plowshares that were beaten into swords,
        the sacred wine-drops molded into bullets,
        the blinding cores of atoms
        that have killed you--
        all must be buried.

The creation of gods to forgive
the evil in men,
the orgies of guilt and expiation,
must be left behind in the same way
men once shed the long hair from their bodies
and lost their fangs.

Let them lay all their rings and weapons,
with their archaic beauty and terror,
on your grave.
                --Robert Hazel

The tale is told. We have rehearsed the Kennedy story much as we experienced it and felt we needed to do so to approach its full meaning. But now we are done with story-telling. We said goodbye to John Kennedy at the end of Chapter VIII, suggesting how his myth might be sorted out and leaving it as a footnote to the Lincoln myth. We said goodbye to Robert Kennedy toward the end of Chapter IX, seeing him pulling away from his brother as, at his best, he pursued historic purposes from an archaic basis using modern means--only to be swallowed up again, in death, by the Kennedy myth (a footnote to a footnote to the Lincoln myth). Perhaps, at a later time, we may want to take a longer look at Robert Kennedy in his own right, but that is not our purpose here. The time has come to say goodbye to the entire Kennedy myth and to examine, at a much more general level, American civil religion as a whole, drawing on the Kennedy myth no longer for its own sake but as it may help to illuminate larger questions related to the shaping of our political processes.

How we approach American civil religion, both within and outside the Kennedy myth, depends on our own stance. For civil religion not only provides the object of our examination but also inexorably informs the perspective from which we examine. There is no neutral standpoint from which we might approach American civil religion. Pretensions to neutrality are themselves a part of modern civil religion to be evaluated as such. The live question is not whether or not to have myths and symbols and civil religion--no person or society has ever been without them nor will they as long as persons have an unconscious dimension and societies have a need for legitimation; the question is the adequacy of our myths, and supposedly "myth-free" myths will have to be considered along with the others in that regard. As Novak has written: "To boast of having a "pragmatic" standpoint and to attack the "moralism" of other points of view is _also_ to take a moral position. There is no nonmoral, objective, neutral position." Criticism, he says, implies a position from which criticism is made: "Any criticism of another's way of life is implicitly a declaration of how life _ought_ to be lived." Even more does political choice involve values and behind them a worldview:

> Every political choice _ipso facto_ raises moral issues. For political choices aim at shaping society this way, rather than that. And what reasons can be given why one choice ought to be preferred to another? Such reasons inevitably involve a view about the identity of man.[1]

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[1] Novak, _Choosing Our King_, p. 100. For Novak also there is no question of whether we will have a civil religion, but only what kind; p. 302.

As Apter has put it, "Politics in its moral sense can be described as approaching religion just as churches in their organizational sense can be said to approach politics."[1] Given the necessity of choosing among them, three basic stances are available to us from which to examine and evaluate American civil religion as illuminated by the Kennedy myth: archaic, modern, and historic. We can not do full justice to any of these stances, least of all to historic civil religion, which encompasses so many streams within it, competing with or complementing one another. Seminal studies have been done of the various streams within historic American civil religion, sometimes seeming to imply that almost all of American civil religion is historic,[2] but ours is a broader task here and we can only hint at some of the particular ramifications of historic civil religion in its major American streams: puritan, republican, and Catholic. I can only concur in Robert Bellah's plea for "the incorporation of vital international symbolism into our civil religion, . . . (resulting) in American civil religion becoming simply one part of a new civil religion of the world;" likewise, I endorse Michael Novak's notion of a "planetary pluralism," which "frankly rejects the pretensions inherent in our own ethnocentric 'universals'" without denying--indeed, enhanced by--maintaining our rootedness in our own peculiar American heritage and experience.[3] Nevertheless, it is not the internal dialogue among streams of historic civil religion, either in America

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[1] David E. Apter, "Political Religion in the New States," in Old Societies and New States, ed. by Clifford Geertz, cited by Lipsitz, op. cit.

[2] All of Robert S. Alley's types in So Help Me God are apparently historic; likewise, although Novak pleads that our civil religion be reformed to reflect all the cultural traditions of our nation, his types are largely historic; Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 123-136. In "Civil Religion in America," Bellah explicitly states that "American civil religion is not the worship of the American nation but an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality (p. 186)" though he is not unaware of superpatriotism there; cf. Broken Covenant.

[3] Bellah, Beyond Belief, p. 186; Novak, Choosing Our King, p. 304.

XUM

or in the world, which is our primary concern here, but our main focus is on the dialogue of historic civil religion--in general but of a more Western, Christian, and American stripe when it receives more particular coloration--with archaic and modern types. We will examine each type as it provides a stance from which to approach--and then, more extensively, as each provides material within--American civil religion as illuminated by the Kennedy myth.

If our stance is archaic, we can leave the kind of American civil religion expressed in the Kennedy myth pretty well alone, for it is largely archaic, ruing only that John Kennedy was a little too much of a "nigger-lover" at the end (he couldn't help it) and went a bit too soft on Communism in his search for peace and either dropping Robert's extension or making sure the real Robert does not step out of Kennedy's shroud. But few of us are completely archaic in stance, and there is some civil religion within the Kennedy myth and a good deal outside it by which the archaic part may be broken open and judged.[1] Even if many of us were attracted to Kennedy's archaic heroism as president, inundated by archaic archtypes in the catastrophe of his death, and plagued by his ghost in the aftermath, we have (most of us) recovered enough of a sense of proportion by now to make a more balanced evaluation of Kennedy. Simply retelling the Kennedy myth with our eyes open tends to weaken its archaic hold, for archaism is most potent when it is unconscious and rarely survives unbroken in the light of day. An archaic approach would prefer to leave the Kennedy myth just as it was in the memory books in all of its unconscious potency; yet, while we do not want to surrender the unconscious and elemental side of our being or to repudiate our own precious experience, most of us do not want to be simply dominated by our unconscious sides and to be thereby subject to those who wish to manipulate us through subliminal images for their own purposes rather than being able to consciously use symbols with unconscious underpinnings and potency for our own purposes. Much less do we wish to be so out of touch with our own depths that we are liable to be "blown out of our minds" when unknown and uncontrollable alien unconscious forces sweep over us in the wake of a catastrophe, as happened in Kennedy's death, which we intensified by our overinvestment in mortal heroes and fallible governments. Unless our stance is so archaic that we revel in such experience, we need to find a way to become more conversant with or to banish (or chain down) our unconscious sides and the rich symbols on which they thrive; clearly, something must be done about the archaic side of American civil religion which the Kennedy myth illuminates so fully. We have not only to get over a completely archaic attachment to Kennedy, if that is where we are, but even more to be on our guard against the blandishments of the next archaic deliverer who promises us salvation. Somehow, the heavy strand of archaic American civil religion must be counteracted by modern or historic American (or international) civil religion. The "violent and guilty boyhood of nations carrying rifles and crosses" must be moderated or put to an end either by dismissing both rifles and crosses or by setting a less archaized cross against the gun.

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[1] One professor routinely referred to my study as the Kennedy idolatry. But to assume that all of American civil religion or even of the Kennedy myth is archaic is a parody. I think it was to avoid this extreme as well as to express his own normative preference that Bellah overstated the historic character of American civil religion in his essay. In his Broken Covenant, it is clear that the covenantal heritage may be used to judge both its archaic appropriation and its modern abandonment.

If our stance is modern, then we will want to dismiss almost all of the kind of American civil religion expressed in the Kennedy myth, except such things as his pragmatism and his search for tolerance and diversity. Sometimes, I hope with the poet that we could simply outgrow and discard all of our overt religiosity in the political field and institute

XUM

a purely rational science of government. But sheer modernism is too slender a reed to bear the whole weight of the world's health.[1] Modernism in its bid to be the exclusive civil religion for a nation is too elitist, too unrealistic, too unhealthy, and too pernicious. It is elitist because only a tiny minority in any society would have the rational qualifications to be its practitioners; it is available only to rational virtuosi and therefore (like its religious counterpart, mysticism)[2] only to the educated classes. Unless we wished to be ruled by an aristocracy or meritocracy, something along the lines of Plato's philosopher-kings or the technocrats despised by Roszak and Reich--and I, like Reinhold Niebuhr, am forever skeptical that anyone else's reason is so disinterested as to know and do what is best for me--we had better not invest all of our stock exclusively in modernism. It is unrealistic to suppose that the masses of any nation would take to the sterility of a purely rational politics, even if it propounded to most efficiently realize their own interests; people look to politics for more than that and always will. Novak warns:

> It is not rational to misconceive the nature of politics in a large democracy. Democratic politics on a scale like that of the United States is necessarily symbolic--not merely symbolic but realistically symbolic. . . . (The presidential office) fills a perennial vacuum at the heart of human expectations. . . . Talk about "doing away with the cult of personality" or "demythologizing the presidency" must be taken as gestures toward an unrealistic rationalism.[3]

Especially in a democracy where winning over a majority of voters at all levels of ignorance and sophistication is a prerequisite to governing, magic may be reduced but never eliminated, as Rossiter told us, from the processes by which free men are governed. It is not healthy to try to excise feelings from persons or from politics, much less is it possible, for the irrational is a normal part of human nature and needs to be accepted as such. Freud has taught us that the unconscious is an essential part of life never to be outgrown, however disguised and rationalized, and that repression only brings the return of the repressed in more potent, underhanded form. It may be well that archaic elements remain under the surface of modern day-to-day politics, but unless we understand them and have some experience in dealing with them, we are likely to be again overwhelmed by them when they surface in crises which are bound to befall us. If we cannot expel ghosts, at least we should familiarize ourselves with them since familiar ghosts plague less. Dismissing or repressing the archaic surely does not rid it of its power. Man's irrationality has certainly not decreased since we started believing he was rational; if anything, irrationalism has increased its sway since modernism has threatened it, weakened its real competitors, and not allowed us to face and acknowledge it and thus perhaps control it. The French Age of Reason disguised irrational totalitarianism; German scientism opened the door for Naziism; Kennedy came close, at times, to the "voluntary totalitarianism" which he had espoused in college despite his pose as a cool, detached pragmatist. Surely, one of the lessons of the Kennedy myth is that modernism can do little to contain archaism without historic civil religion as an ally to counterbalance it. What is so pernicious about exclusive modernism is the illusion that it can rule without political values, bracketing off moral and religious questions at a conscious level at the same time as it is bound to have religious concomitants at a dangerously unconscious level. There are many things I like about modernism, and I surely would not want to surrender abstract intelligence any more than deep feelings; but as a means of counteracting archaism on a large scale I must say it is simply ineffective. However much we may wish to maximize the rational side of politics, it is an illusion to suppose it can ever be the only side; and it seems the saner part to include within the art of government a recognition of the religious factors which continue to shape it.

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[1] Fairlie sometimes sounds like a modernist, but his argument for political values, of which sheer modernism knows nothing, puts him more in the historic camp. Fairlie is aware of the bankruptsy of Kennedy's positivism as well as his archaic, but he also opposes puritanism in politics. As a critic par excellence, it is not clear who his friends are.

[2] Troeltsch sees a reasonable modern religion loosely gravitating into informal fellowships, which he calls mysticism, as small and weak.

[3] Novak, Choosing Our King, pp. 174, 5, 10.

If our stance is historic, then we will be able neither to accept nor to dismiss the kind of civil religion expressed in the Kennedy myth in a wholesale manner. There is very little in the Kennedy myth that can be directly affirmed as historic, just some glimmers in the drive for civil rights and for peace both in Kennedy himself and as more passionately pursued by Robert in his name though partly in reversal. Much of what historic civil religion has to say must be brought in from other segments of American civil religion, both national and ecclesiastical, outside of the Kennedy myth though even then not without self-criticism. Thus armed, an historic stance can sort out the wheat from the chaff in the kinds of civil religion illuminated by the Kennedy myth, not merely affirming the historic materials and rejecting the archaic and modern materials out of hand, but also seeking to mediate between the other two types and to "redeem" them, encompassing non-exclusive modernism within the republican stream which has an affinity for it and encompassing non-exclusive archaism with the Catholic stream which has an affinity for it (with the puritan stream itself in a median position between republican and Catholic streams).[1] To this task we now turn.

I

Kennedy did not invent the archaic notion of America as divine or as "God's country" which is often the equivalent. Although there was originally a covenantal sense in America's perceived relation to God it soon enough boiled down into an unconditional relationship, a manifest destiny. We have always counted on God to "guide" us, "bless" us, "help" us (more than to judge us), to give us leaders, and to support our wars. We have always fought for "freedom" and we have always won. We fought the American Revolution to free ourselves from the British, fought the Civil War to free the slaves, fought World War I to make the world safe for democracy. I do not mean to imply that there was no justice in any of these wars but only that we approached them as archaic holy wars, largely unaware of the injustice which was also involved--especially as the myths about these wars have come down to us. Christian notions of judgment were invoked, e.g., in the Battle Hymn of the Republic, but the Union was seen as the arm and not the recipient of God's justice as its tramping soldiers trampled out the vintage of Southern blood and culture, reading the Bible by the fire of the military camp and praising God as they passed the ammunition. Christ's dying to make men holy comes from an altogether different religion of brotherhood, but it is here amalgamated to the religion of war as the parallel, if not the equivalent, of our dying to make men free. Not only the Battle Hymn but Lincoln himself, as we noted, blessed the religion of war with Christian symbols in his Gettysburg Address--with all his talk of the holiness of dead soldiers giving their last full measure of devotion and spurring us to dedication lest they die in vain (though offset in Lincoln himself by a more universal sense of judgment, a consciousness of the mixture of good and evil in all, a search for reconciliation, and a belief in America as an "almost chosen people"). It was to such an archaic military hero's death, dying "for his country," that Lincoln's murder was assimilated, and Kennedy likewise as another Lincoln--even by preachers

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[1] Again, I can only hint here at the internal dialogue within historic civil religion and at the particular edges which touch other types.

XUM

who should have known better. Repeating Lincoln in myth and ritual--and thus Christ and Caesar, martyrdom and heroism--is what we always do with presidential murder; it had very little to do with Kennedy himself though a similar relationship to Negro rights provided an adventitious parallel and though Kennedy himself did promote in his life and speeches the religion of war which colored his death and dominated its ceremonialization, as the state funeral with its marching troops of death, riderless horse, haunting drums, roaring cannons, piercing taps, and folded flag--capped off with the lighting of the eternal flame on his magnificent grave--dwarfed his church funeral in popular imagination and remembrance, constituting a kind of archetypal sacred experience, similar to a primitive rededication festival, which was sacramentally re-presented through the various media of memorialization. The holiness of dead soldiers and defending "freedom" in its hour of maximum danger and lighting the world with his fire and unqualified devotion to country from which one asked nothing and gave everything in self-sacrifice and paying any price in an unlimited holy war to insure not only the survival but also the success of liberty were all there in Kennedy's Inaugural Address in the "sermon" that defined our reality when his coronation began the "Kennedy years" and in its repetition from the mouth of a bishop at his funeral; and such archaic themes were presaged in a presidential campaign which called us--with various degrees of response from reistance to total devotion--to a new and strenuous era pursuing nationalistic purposes and were continued in a decade dominated by posthumous obedience to Kennedy and by the antagonism of his rival successors. Kennedy clearly regarded Washington, D.C., as the axis mundi, politically and culturally, or at least the capital of the Free World (which included all our allies regardless of how oppressive their governments were), and he regarded himself as Cosmocrator bringing order to the world as he battled the beasts of Bolshevism, big business, and bigotry in successive crises, called to defend freedom not only with a sense of ultimacy in Berlin, where it may have made some sense, but also in Vietnam where it made no sense to the people who had to be "pacified" so they could receive the "freedom" we had to offer, sometimes even destroyed in order that we could "save" them. Kennedy's cult of toughness, his fear of being thought soft on communism, and his fear of failure, which archaism can never accept, also kept Kennedy and his successors in Vietnam well past the time when it was sane to do so. The archaic love of winning, which was Kennedy's greatest love, the heart of the "Kennedy neurosis," and his continuing preoccupation even after he had achieved the highest office in the land, is a not unusual American characteristic, and the perennial myth of American innocence reasserted itself after the overly devasting loss of Kennedy as sacred king in roles of imperator, father, representative, and high priest, making Kennedy a winner again by diabolizing his assassin as a manifestation of sheer, localized, comprehensible evil and by looking at Kennedy repeatedly and uncritically in an idealized light. The sense of America the Incorrigible which gripped those most devastated by Robert Kennedy's death and by the malaise with which the Sixties ended was again transcended by Richard Nixon's reassertion of American innocence, knowing that the heart of America is good, seeking to squelch radical-liberal criticism (through Spiro Agnew), and calling America to fulfill his own version of the American dream, including peace with honor in Vietnam and law and order at home. Yet history has not been kind to this latest version of American archaism, and the collapse of Richard Nixon has tended to tarnish other presidents, fore and aft. The exposure of the "imperial presidency," the sobering experience of Watergate as presidential betrayal, and the final rout of our puppet governments in

XUM

South Vietnam and Cambodia, for which thousands of Americans did die in vain, suggests that we are not as likely in the near future to put such unlimited archaic trust in our presidents nor to follow them uncritically into glorious misadventures. Perhaps, at long last, we are ready to abandon the cycle of too high expectation and too deep disillusionment, which was our Kennedy experience as well as our Nixon experience, rooted in an archaic civil religion which must continually fail because it cannot give the assurances of religion in an uncontrollable world, and, thus chastened, to view our presidents, however valiant, not as saviours, but only men like ourselves, capable of error and deception.[1]

II

In pursuing a modern pragmatism, Kennedy was also pursuing a strand which is strong in American civil religion. Although the British have done more to develop utilitarianism as a philosophy and the Germans have done more to propound Realpolitik as a method of political analysis and operation--and we have borrowed both--the Americans have a strong native strain of practicality which is good at mechanics and loves gadgetry and soon tires of theory. At its best, this modernism enabled Kennedy to detach himself from ideological economic slogans and to deal with the economy in a straightforward way as a technical matter amenable to Keynsian economics, and this was certainly one factor in the unusual prosperity of the Kennedy-Johnson years.[2] A modern defense of law and order against archaic Southern custom provided the opening wedge in Kennedy's civil rights strategy. The search for a peace based on mutual tolerance in a world made safe for diversity, in which there could not be an American solution to every problem, was a noble bequest of the modern heritage though Kennedy did not come to hold it, except rhetorically, until after experience revealed the bankruptsy of his archaic brinksmanship, which reached its zenith in the Cuban missile crisis. Yet Kennedy's modernism was always incomplete. He hung back from pursuing his economic policy (e.g., a tax cut) through lack of political courage in the absence of clear support, actually thwarted it in the long run through his theatrics in the steel dispute, lacked the patience to pursue slow, long-term strategies both in domestic and in diplomatic arenas, and was fairly oblivious of the divergent interests of diverse groups in his drive for a unified consensus. In civil rights, merely defending law as law proved inadequate and a more purposeful approach was required than his modernism could supply. In the international area, freedom from ideology was a hoax since the Cold War went on all the same and all the more, as Kennedy increased the defense budget, refused to let Khrushchev rub his nose in the dirt, and went from crisis to crisis with no conceptual strategy (except Rostow's grandiose scheme for redemption through development). Kennedy relied too much on a too narrow and truncated kind of positivism and operational intelligence and even then he did not follow it. If he had been pursuing a Realpolitik, he would not have accorded such weight to appearances during the Cuban missile crisis, and he would have gotten out of Vietnam when the "intelligence" for which he had waited finally came through telling him that the war was hopeless as well as not vital to our interests. But there was a playful hybris in Kennedy's modernism which thought human intelligence and will could change the world as it wished by dreaming it and pursuing it efficiently. The moonshot was billed as an adventure in space, and the success of this purely technological feat fueled the illusion that political problems could be solved as easily and by the same methods, that the world was no longer intractable before man-come-of-age, that no problem is beyond man who can be as big as he wants. A spirit of adventure also dispatched thousands of American kids into the jungles and savannas of the Third World on a mission imposoble under the banners of the Peace Corps, a peaceful contingent in the battle to keep the Free World free through development (whose success would make Communism less attractive), and more directly that same spirit sent thousands of Cuban exiles to be slaughtered on the beaches by the Bay of Pigs when their homeland turned out not to be so eagerly awaiting an easy "liberation" as had been supposed. The experience of disaster led Kennedy to blame the intelligence services and supposedly taught him not to trust the experts uncritically, but he never realized that the basic fault was not with intelligence but with his use of it as he continued to be enamoured with quick answers full of numbers and to lack the deeper wisdom with which his modernism could not supply him.

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[1] Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, pp. 4, 361, 364. Writes Thomas Griffith: "The time has come to de-emphasize not the office of the presidency but the myth of the omnipotent President, reigning from the Oval Office, glorified for being lonely in his ordeals when he should be judged by whether he can inspire independent men around him, can listen to divergent advice and make clear choices, and can then invoke the strengths of the nation as a whole."

[2] James Reston claims that Kennedy and his tax cut were "largely responsible for heading the country into the longest period of peacetime prosperity since World War II;" "What Was Killed Was the Promise," p. 228.

The incompleteness of Kennedy's modernism was evident in his allowing archaic considerations to predominate over it but more basically in its lacking within itself the resources for the all-sufficient governmental process which it claimed to supply, thus requiring completion from some other source even when pursued to the end. I do not know if it is fair to take Kennedy as exemplary of the whole of modern American civil religion, but I suspect that the incompleteness manifest in Kennedy's modernism is inherent in any modernism and not just in his peculiar pursuit of it. There is so much of human experience which is simply outside the modernistic calculus: just as Kennedy was unable to learn the deeper lessons of the Bay of Pigs "mistake," so modernists could not deal with but only dismiss

Kennedy's death and myth as they sought to get back to business in the part of life they understood. There surely is a place for modern technical expertise in government though not at its helm and not as its only resource; though the President might just as well not be an intellectual, there is also a place for critical intellect in government and even more outside it to evaluate it, maintaining a kind of separation of university and state to insure independent modern critics of the state just as separation of church and state can help to provide it with independent historic critics. While Kennedy emptied the universities to turn brainy men into government operatives, it seems wiser for government not to become too devoted to a modern point of view--surely not merely as a mask and means for archaic designs--but rather remain responsive to it as it emanates from independent universities.

III

Historic civil religion is the basic strand of American civil religion. Our puritan forbears came to this new land to establish a holy commonwealth, beholden to a sovereign God who provided them with transcendent ideals which both guided and judged them, rendering them quite aware of the arrogance of power and skeptical of charismatic claims. Our nation was founded upon republican principles, chief among which was a God-given right to liberty, accompanied by a lofty sense of the duties of citizenship and a humble sense of the equality of all men, which refused to exalt public officials ceremonially. More recently, Catholic civil religion has belatedly entered into historic American civil religion with its sense of an eternal backdrop behind the human stage, a sense of human solidarity, and belief in a durable world with a permanent tragic dimension; it is not so much an addition to the other two "sky religions" leading us forward to conquer new worlds as an "earth religion" which could help to counterbalance their impatience and austerity.

Despite some nods toward historic civil religion at the beginning and end of Kennedy's Inaugural Address and even more in his farewell to Massachusetts, historic American civil religion is illuminated in the Kennedy myth by its absence, not its presence, indeed often by its being sorely lacking. Kennedy was detached from historic civil religion--puritan, republican, and Catholic streams alike. While a "religious test" for office in terms of ecclesiastical affiliation is improper, a violation of separation of church and state rightly reversed by Kennedy's election (the so-called "religious issue"), the question of Kennedy's values, his operant civil religion (the real religious issue), deserves to be asked of Kennedy and of every presidential aspirant; criticism and evaluation at this point is quite justified, and, from a puritan point of view, church and state must be separate to encourage such criticism (in contrast to Kennedy's modern point of view which saw the church as irrelevant to political life). Yet criticism is precisely what the church (and intellectuals) did not give Kennedy enough of, not when he was alive, even less in death, except for fixed allusions to his sins, like every man's, in the funeral Mass. Nor did Kennedy provide self-criticism for himself. So often fundamental assumptions went unquestioned, bracketed out by the pragmatic process he loved so well, and those who tried to raise questions of value were either disregarded or banished (lacking total loyalty because they had principles of their own!). So often precisely what was lacking in the Kennedy political method--which Fairlie documents over and over and about whose repetition he warns us--were political values, limited historic goods which might be prioritized and methodically pursued. Whether Kennedy had convictions is a moot point; he surely did not have the courage of his convictions, was unwilling to take limited historic risks for political programs though he was all too willing to take all-out risks in his cult of toughness, and lacked the patience and perseverence to carry out the long twilight struggle against tyranny, poverty, disease, and war which he had annunciated.

Yet Kennedy was not without some glimmers of historic civil religion, especially near the end of his life when, Sorensen tells us, values finally counted more to him than votes. When riots forced his hand, Kennedy transcended his enforcement of existing civil rights laws and his middling administrative actions to propose sweeping civil rights legislation, not simply based on the pressure of black constituents and their white urban allies but also backed by historic ideals of justice and equality. In the peace area, Kennedy began moves toward arms control, coexistence, and detente, symbolized by the test ban treaty, which does not constitute the full organic peace for which we hope but surely--in contrast to the Col War ideology of confrontation in which he had been embroiled--involves a move in an historic direction. After his death, Kennedy was idealized as a hero of historic peace and freedom, which, despite its shallow rootedness in reality, was not an ignoble ideal. It was partly that ideal which motivated Robert Kennedy as John Kennedy's extension to question the justice of the Vietnam war, as Kennedy had never done, along the lines of an historic just war theory, even repudiating his brother's policy, and also moved him to identify with the poor and blacks and other victims in a quite compassionate historic manner. Historic civil religion was largely lacking from responses to Kennedy's death, especially as the church lent itself to archaic unification and commended some of the worst sides of Kennedy to be followed uncritically, even putting him forward as a martyr and a Christ figure, but there was

XUM

of turning to an historic providential or covenantal God, a temporary questioning of American innocence and a wallowing in slightly misdirected guilt, and at least some halting attempts to find historic meaning in the assassination in particular and in tragedy in general.

An understanding of the tragic dimension of life is one of the many areas in which American civil religion needs to be expanded through the workings of a theonomous historic civil religion, mediating between archaic and modern types and completing the actual historic civil religion present now. While archaic civil religion avoids tragedy and failure like the plague, knowing that it will be overwhelmed by them if it "loses" and its divinity is once again revealed to have feet of clay; and while modern civil religion regards tragedy, failure, and death as "irrational," minimizes them as "setbacks" and "mistakes" in its inability to grasp the depths of evil (or of good) because of its optimistic view of man, and tries to get back to business as soon as possible; historic civil religion at its theonomous best is able to embrace tragedy, failure, and death as part of life without being overwhelmed by them because it knows them to be comprehended by a transcendent divine ultimately unshaken by them and also to be amenable to limited human comprehension,[1] because it knows--without denial--the success of failure (as well as the failure of success),[2] and because it knows all of life and all men, even our sublimest nations and leaders, to be a partially corrupted good and can caparison sin and death in ceremonies and symbols which acknowledge and contain them.[3] While archaism seeks to repeat the past (Golden Age) in a world which it believes

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[1] I have always liked the heresy of Patripassianism in which God the Father suffers in human tragedies while surviving them, lest God be cold.

[2] Christ "wins," not Pilate; his cross is a victory symbol.

[3] Kennedy's funeral had this function as the church recognized that "all men sin and fall short of God's glory" but affirmed him as forgiven.

XUM

cannot be changed but must be accepted fatalistically; and while modernism seeks to dream up and bring in a totally new future (new era, utopia) in a world which is completely malleable to human intelligence and will; historic civil religion seeks to live in a present which is nourished by its past and open to its future, grounded and venturing, in a given world where human striving is of limited value and effectiveness (with more stress on passively accepting the givenness of the world in the Catholic stream and more stress on active striving in the puritan and republican streams). While archaism stresses man's feelings, consummatory experiences, and ancient archetypes at the depths of life; and while modernism stresses man's reason, instrumental actions, and latest concepts at the surface of life; historic civil religion at its best seeks a whole man whose unconscious feelings and conscious thoughts are in dialogue with each other, who balances his being and his doing,[1] who is able to speak the whole range of man's languages, who is neither stranger to his own depths nor finds mundane life profane.[2] While archaism proceeds from a firm knowledge of good and evil, presumes itself innocent and demonizes its enemies, and exalts the pursuit of a binding national purpose through self-sacrifice as the way to salvation; and while modernism skirts the question of good and evil, presumes that all persons and nations have the right to live as they please by their own lights (conscience, private judgment or whatever) in mutual tolerance unrestrained as long as they respect the same rights for others, and exalts the pursuit of private interests however selfish without regard to salvation;

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[1] Again, Catholicism stresses being more and puritanism puts more stress on doing. Eliade portrays an oscillation between making history and escape from history, which parallels a West-East split (A "buddhist" reversal of a Western dictum is: "Don't just do something, stand there.")

[2] Kennedy both operated from unconscious assumptions and was bored by ordinary politics. For Tillich, one may approach the divine as ground of the self. Jesus ended the sacred/secular split; nothing is profane.

historic civil religion at its best has a limited knowledge of good and evil, sees good and evil mixed ambiguously in varying proportions in all things human and is willing to make proximate judgments to that effect, and commends the pursuit of compromised values as fruit rather than means of salvation, cognizant of transcendent ideals and devoted to a transcendent God who fulfills the self that denies itself in him.[1] While archaism endorses "freedom" as a code word for its own national way of life and while modernism endorses freedom (license) as the untrammeled pursuit of private interest within legal (and perhaps, professional code) limits, historic civil religion endorses freedom (liberty) as a God-given right and transcendent ideal which guides and judges our present system and brings a share of responsibility with it. While archaism conducts holy wars to defend its sacred honor, to fulfill its national purpose, and to reaffirm its dedication and faith and seeks peace as an enforced pacification which prevents its evil enemies from challenging it;[2] and while modernism conducts "wars of convenience" as the last resort of diplomacy when national interests can be best served by them--without judging war as good or evil except in regard to its probable effects in these terms--and seeks peace based on mutual tolerance as the usual context in which business and science and their offspring, technological progress, can be best pursued without disturbance (though war is often good for business, e.g., the Civil War, World War II, and technological progress in armaments, as Shaw dramatized, far outstrips any other field); historic civil religion at its

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[1] The question of how best to maintain the tension between the transcendent ideals of the religious tradition and the compromised values which need to be arrived at in political action in an imperfect world is a continuing and difficult problem in Christian ethics to which various streams of historic civil religion--including sectarian, Lutheran, and liberal as well as Catholic, puritan, and republican--have given differing answers.

[2] For instance, the Pax Romana destroying Carthage and its American parallel; World War I peace terms aimed to cripple Germany not to reconcile.

its best somewhat reluctantly advocates just wars as a lesser evil when the outcome will be sufficiently more just than the present situation to justify the limited expenditure of blood and treasure and seeks peace as a reconciliation of conflict, as an organic assembly of mankind culturally as well as juridically, and as a divine gift of harmony and prosperity (shalom), informed by the transcendent ideal of pacifism.[1] While archaism promotes a unification in which all segments and institutions of society are integrated behind a common national purpose, regarding a decline in partisanship as an unqualified good which blessedly takes the place of more acrimonious and "selfish" debate; and while modernism fosters a fragmentation in which all segments and institutions of society pursue their own autonomous functions in line with their own interests, regarding partisanship as an essential element in the minimal accomodations for mutual benefit worked out in the political process; historic civil religion at its best seeks a unity which encompasses all the segments and institutions of society in a harmony which recognizes pluralism and a degree of separation between them,[2] regarding partisanship as a limited good in the process of compromise in which general transcendent values must be more decisive. While archaism regards the state as divine, a source of salvation, purpose, and sacred mission to which each man submits in an unqualified love of country; and while modernism regards nothing as divine, including the state,[3] and dismisses messianism, mission, and patriotism in a view of minimal government as subservient to private interests;

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[1] Some historic traditions affirm pacifism more directly--but they do not run governments. In the apocalyptic Biblical vision, the lion lies down with the lamb in the peaceable kingdom.

[2] "E pluribus unum" is the republican slogan. Catholicism favors a hierarchical or organic unity, puritanism more voluntaristic institutions.

[3] Perhaps, functionally, the will of the people is divine in the side of modernism which leans more toward republicanism.

historic civil religion at its best regards the state as ordained by and accountable to a transcendent God, sees the function of government to promote both the public good and private welfare, and endorses a limited love of countrybased on the degree of its commitment to values stretched by transcendent ideals and compatible with international pluralistic universalism.[1] While archaism regards its top governor as an unqualified sacred king, who is sole high priest, representative, father, and imperator; and while modernism regards its top governor as a politician without symbolic roles or functions; historic civil religion at its best regards its top governor as a limited king, to whom citizens may look for some high priestly inspiration,[2] representative identification, fatherly protection, and imperative leadership within the political arena--with the degree of looking to him depending on his actual words, deeds, and character--yet always aware of their own citizenship in heaven as well and their more primary fealty to God and to transcendent ideals by which they judge their king.

With this historic perspective in mind, mediating between the archaic and the modern, we need to take one more final look at Kennedy himself as we seek to wrap up the Kennedy myth and find whatever place is most suitable for a continuing Kennedy in ourselves. The form in which Kennedy has lingered longest for most of us is as a representative or hero. The need for a people to symbolically represent their civil community and its ideals through human figures of the past is part of the oldest, most primitive, most "elementary" civil religion we know;

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[1] Again, Catholicism, like archaism, has tended to emphasize the finite manifestations of the divine in government (and elsewhere: saints, etc.) while puritanism emphasizes the transcendence of the divine.

[2] Novak wants this role scaled down so that the metaphysical power of the president to define reality is reduced by keeping media separate.

from an historic perspective, we need neither to entirely affirm this process archaically nor to dismiss it modernistically but can affirm it in a limited and qualified fashion. If it is too much, in a highly differentiated society for one man to be saint and star as well as sultan, so be it; even the primitives had not one but many men (ancestors) to represent greatness and so should we, some greater than others. Though gilded heroes may be useful during adolescence, it also seems healthier if we, like the primitives, so not worship heroes, drawing vicarious gratification from their magnificence while we remain impoverished, but identify with representatives, becoming the best of what we see in them. The heart of the Kennedy myth is the identification, especially of the young, with their fallen president, undergirded by memorialization and engendering support (via mythic charisma) for a continuation of the kind of political process for which they saw him stand. If, in retrospect, the original Kennedy myth has taken on a revised version more in keeping with its true significance, if we find fault with his compulsion to win and his image as a cool Don Juan, if even those who knew him best hardly knew him, if we have seen how the passion of his death transfigured a life without passion (of the "young god without wound"), if "now we hear the words when before we only heard the music (as a college student put it)," if we sense the gap between his rhetoric (which we still may value) and his accomplishments and even see the way in which unkept promises and impossible promises are worse than none--we need not derogate the time when we incorporated better ideals than Kennedy had into ourselves in the name of Kennedy nor yet demote Kennedy as a symbolic reality which we created for ourselves out of our own best aspirations. Nor do we need to despise the mortal Kennedy, who, with all of his faults and glories, was, after all, a man like ourselves with whom we can also identify. Kennedy may not have been much of

XUM

a president, but some hopeful strides toward civil rights and peace began with him and call for our continued efforts, and he may not have been all that a man could be, but he had a winning way, an engaging smile and sense of humor, and, as his alleged assassin said, " a nice family," which does not constitute authoritative charisma but leaves fond memories. Kennedy's image as a family man, teaching John John the ways of buttercups, may be the way he best represents us and the image that stays with us longest, perhaps even longer than the trauma of his death and its ceremonialization--for which we are also "indebted" to him for re-uniting us there with another side of our lives--if we can ever face it and work through and lay it behind us. Having seen through our need to exalt him, reducing Kennedy to human dimensions does not denigrate him but makes the Kennedy myth a part of the most significant and universal myth of all, the myth of man, which, in Christian tradition has been colored by the myth of Adam, man made in the image of God, and the myth of Christ, God taking form of man. However we size him up, Kennedy retains a special place in our hearts. It may be said of John Kennedy what Newfield said of Robert Kennedy, who, in my view was a better Kennedy reborn with passion and conviction: "He was not a hero, only a hope; he was not a myth, only a man. But to have been a hope and a man in America during the 1960's was to be something special."[1]

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[1] Newfield, Robert Kennedy, p. 19.

APPENDICES

XUM

APPENDIX A

MODELS FOR PHASE ANALYSIS[1]

The major model comes from grief research. Sheatsley and Feldman present Engel's model of stages of grief: 1) an initial phase of shock and disbelief, 2A) a stage of developing awareness of the loss, marked by the painful effects of sadness, guilt, shame, helplessness, or hopelessness, 2B) the process of grief, characterized by crying, by a sense of loss and emptiness, by loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, and sometimes somatic symptoms of pain or other discomfort.[2] Schramm takes over this model, retaining the first phase of 1) shock and disbelief; coalescing 2A and 2B into a single stage fleshed out with survey results, portrayed as 2) a developing awareness of the loss, along with feelings of sorrow, sadness, shame, and anger (and worry) and symptoms such as weeping, tenseness, sleeplessness, fatigue, or loss of appetite; and adding a third stage 3,5) gradual recovery and return to a normal emotional state.[3] My scheme coincides with Schramm's, except that I include vengeance and fear in the protest phase as mechanisms for warding off pre-occupation with the loss (albeit retaining rage, anxiety, and worry in the second phase) and subdivide his recovery stage with the funeral effects in re-organization and return to normal in succession, splitting rededication to Kennedy's values from rededication to national values.

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[1] Most of the positions reported below are taken from their sources verbatim without quotation marks. The numbering system in the various models has been made to coincide with my five-phase scheme: 1) protest, 2) disorganization, 3) reorganization, 4) memorialization, 5) succession.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 159.

[3] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 19-20.

Wolfenstein, using nomenclature I have adopted, presents Bowlby's 3-phase model based on psychoanalytic investigation of emotional reactions to the loss of loved persons. The first phase is one of 1) protest, in which the feelings of a young child at separation from his mother are re-evoked. The separation from the loved person is felt to be intolerable, and there is a clamorous demand for the person's return. In this phase the reality of the loss is vehemently denied. The second phase is one of 2) disorganization, precipitated by some realization that the loved person is not coming back. Many feelings of distress and disturbance characterize this phase. It constitutes a transition from the way of life predicated on the presence of the loved person to a life in which he can no longer play a part. Much pain is involved in detachment of feelings from the lost person and the abandonment of habits and expectations that were associated with him. The third phase is one of 3,5) reorganization, of going on with life. In this phase the loss of the loved person has been assimilated and no longer occasions traumatic repercussions or deep distress. In this phase the transfer of feelings to other persons who can more or less take the place of the one who has dies is of major importance. Feelings for the lost person have not been obliterated, but are reduced in amount and intensity. The survivor is reconciled to his loss and can think of the lost person without pain.[1] Wolfenstein presents her conclusions in Bowbly's 3-phase frame, elaborates it some, and incorporates findings suggested by disaster and primal horde models within it; I will do the same. My scheme coincides with Wolfenstein's, except that she discusses defense mechanisms, retribution, and relief within the disorganization phase while I retain them in the protest phase (where she includes anger), and, again, I subdivide her re-organization phase, keeping some in mine (e.g., idealization) but relegating the perpetuation of the lost person in memory and in other external and internal ways to the memorialization phase and the transfer of feelings to the succession phase.[1]

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. xviii.

Disaster research provides a second model. Schramm presents the National Research Council's 5-stage disaster model: 0) the pre-disaster period, 1) the period of detection and communication of a specific threat, 2) the period of immediate, relatively unorganized response, 3) the period of organized social response, and 5) the long-run post-disaster period when the society is restored to equilibrium and the 'permanent' effects of the disaster have been incorporated into it.[2] Schramm tends to dismiss the disaster model; I do not. As a public loss, some aspects of the assassination are better illuminated by the disaster model than by the private loss model. Omitting the pre-disaster period, which is not our concern,[3] many of the responses to the assassination resemble disaster responses. According to Wolfenstein, many people gave an 1) initial reaction of being stunned, dazed, or shocked, which has been characterized as the 'disaster syndrome," when they heard the news and would not believe it, fantasizing ways in which it did not happen or could have been prevented; apparently the typical response to both private and public tragedy is disbelief. Also like a disaster, the assassination 2) raised apprehension about being compounded by further tragedies and posed the problem of evil, challenging latent or explicit beliefs about the benevolent ordering of the world; such concerns might tend to be stronger, or at least more widespread, in a public tragedy. Finally, 3) the tendency to recapitulate the disastrous event repeatedly, in an effort to assimilate it and master the disorganizing stress it has caused was quite evident in response to the assassination as was the feeling of having been brought closer together by what had been commonly undergone, coupled with 3,5) a resolve to do better, 5) a wish that good come out of evil, and an assimilation of what had happened into a coherent view of the world.[1] Again, this 'post-disaster utopia' seems to be a function of the public character of the tragedy which was experienced by many together. Unlike a disaster, as Schramm points out, there was no widespread destruction and no widespread need for physical help or relief.[2] Yet the appeal for money for the wife of a slain Dallas policeman and later for Mrs. Oswald was readily met. What this indicates is not that the assassination was not a disaster but that it was a disaster of a peculiar sort. It was a public calamity about which people felt, as in a disaster, that they ought to do something, but about which there was actually nothing to do. And it was a loss so public that the usual inhibitions restraining grief over a private loss were not present. Together the lack of anything to do but watch television and dote on one's loss and the removal of inhibition intensified the outpouring of grief beyond that usual in either a disaster or a loss of a loved one. At the intersection of the grief and disaster models, being both personal and public, both a loss and a calamity, the assassination was a peculiarly potent event.

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 221-232.

[2] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 6.

[3] Some disasters occur without warning, thus having no pre-disaster phase; there may be ways to prevent assassinations, a pre-assassination phase.

Two other models bear some mention. Wolfenstein makes limited use

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. xvi, 230.

[2] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 6.

XUM

of a psychoanalytic model based on Freud's myth of the primal horde. Baldly, the stages of this model would be: 1) relief at having gotten rid of an overly powerful father figure; 2) guilt over parricide; 3) expiation and incorporation of the father into the self; 4) idealization of the father into someone godlike; 5) posthumous obedience to him.[1] This model is more speculative, but it illuminates the assassination as the death of a ruler in a way that neither the personal loss nor the disaster models do. And it suggests a peculiar significance to such a death extending beyond the rapid recovery which typically follows a disaster or the loss of a loved one. The other model, Schramm's favorite, is based on systems theory. Schramm presents a 3-stage model: 1) a sudden imbalance in the system, followed by 3) emergency steps to restore balance, and then 5) a gradual restoration of normal functioning around whatever new balance is achieved. In his first stage, 1) the news is told of Kennedy's death. In his second stage, 1) people were shocked, 2) society staggered under the blow, but 3) struggled to restore equilibrium. In his final stage, 2) people overcame their shock, 3) expiated their grief, 5) the government closed ranks around a new chief and people returned to old responsibilities in a new situation. The demand on communication, which is the focus of Schramm's article, was largely a demand for 1) facts in the first stage, for 3) therapy in the second stage, and for 5) interpretation or meaning in the third.[2] To me, the systems model seems far too general to be of particular use in understanding the Kennedy assassination. The model tends to gloss over disorganization and memorialization as dysfunctional in restoring equilibrium, missing that overcoming shock leads deeper into grief and that funeral catharsis leads into a continuing pre-occupation with Kennedy.

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[1] For a full telling of this myth by Freedman, see Chapter VII, #2C.

[2] Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," pp. 7-8.

XUM

TABLE: MY PHASE ANALYSIS AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

TYPE	AUTH.	Protest	Disorganisation	Reorganisation	Memorialisation	Succession
GRIEF	ENGEL	shock	awareness of loss:			
		disbelief	sadness			
			guilt			
			shame			
			helplessness			
			hopelessness			
			process of grief:			
			crying			
			loss, emptiness			
			appetite loss			
			sleeplessness			
			pain, discomfort			
	SCHRAMM	shock	awareness of loss	gradual recovery		
		disbelief	sorrow	*return to normal		**
			sadness			
			shame			
			anger			
			worry			
			weeping			
			tenseness			
			sleeplessness			
			fatigue			
			appetite loss			
LOSS	BOWLBY	separation	no return	*life going on		**
		demand return	distress	*loss assimilated	**	
		denial	disturbance	no trauma/distress		
			transition	*transfer of feelings		**
			detachment	reduced feelings		
			abandonment	reconciliation		
	WOLF.	**	*defenses	idealization		
		*	retribution	*perpetuation	**	
		**	*relief			
DISASTER	SCH.	detect; tell	unorganized	social response		equilibrium
		publicize				incorporate effects
	WOLFN.	stunned, dazed	apprehension	recapitulation		
		shocked	problem of evil	*assimilation	**	
		disbelief		closeness		
		prevention		*rededication		**
				*meaning, coherence		**
FREUD		relief	guilt	expiation	apotheosis	obedience
				incorporation		
SYSTEMS	SCHRAMM	imbalance		emergency steps		new balance
		news told	staggering	struggle for balance		back new chief
		shock	overcome shock	expiate grief		resume duties
		facts sought		therapy sought		interpretation

*

*place in antecedent system **place in my scheme (rededication is split)

APPENDIX B

SEGMENTAL ANALYSIS OF GRIEF REACTIONS

Virtually every American grieved over the loss of President Kennedy. No segment was untouched. In contrast to the usual apathy with which most Americans greet most political events, "the death of the national leader appears to trigger off very profound emotional reactions in almost all men, no matter what their status in society."[1] As is characteristic of Americans in time of national crisis and in the deaths in office of previous Presidents, even Kennedy's opponents shared in the general grief.[2] Sixty-two per cent of Southern whites who opposed Kennedy in 1960 reported feeling "the loss of someone very close and dear;" one third of them cried.[3] And although television-watching time is hardly by itself a measure of grief, Kennedy's political opponents did not eschew the activity which preoccupied others, but themselves averaged six to seven hours per day.[4] Nevertheless, in terms of differentials, it was Kennedy opponents who grieved least and, as one might expect, Kennedy partisans (which included most Negroes and much of the lower class) who most rued his loss.

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[1] Bradburn, "Public Apathy," p. 286.

[2] Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 168-169; Verba, "Political Commitment," pp. 357, 355; Manchester, Death, p. 447.

[3] Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 167, 158; Manchester, Death, p. 532.

[4] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 159. Those who watched television most were women, those over thirty-four, middle class, Kennedy supporters, white adults, and Negro children. It does not add up to much. It reflects having time available to watch television as much as being any index of grief, e.g., twice as many Negroes as whites reported wanting to watch television but being unable to do so; Greenberg, "Social Research," pp. 366-376.

1. Somatic Reactions It is in the realm of somatic reactions that the differential is most clear with the basic cleavage occurring between Kennedy supporters and opponents, but compounded by race and region. This cleavage pertains both to the very common grief responses and to the less frequent anxiety responses to the loss of Kennedy.[1]

In terms of crying, which common sense would consider the clearest indicator of grief, the National Opinion Research Center survey found that while 53 per cent of the national sample of pro-Kennedy Southerns cried, the figure rose to just over 60 per cent for Negroes and for white pro-Kennedy Northerners and declined to 42 per cent among Kennedy's Northern opponents and to 34 per cent among his Southern opponents. Similarly, white pro-Kennedy Southerners at 38 per cent were closest to the national average of 43 per cent in loss of appetite while pro-Kennedy Notherners (52 per cent) and Negroes (58 per cent) exceeded the average and Kennedy's Northern and Southern opponents trailed at 31 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively. The race factor was even more prominent in other somatic indicators of grief. Close to 70 per cent of the national sample and of Kennedy supporters felt very nervous and tense, compared to about 56 per cent of Kennedy opponents while Negroes shot up to 80 per cent. Kennedy opponents were more than a decade below the national average on the insomnia scale and Kennedy partisans were no more than 5 per cent above it, but Negroes were 20 per cent higher than average; the same kind of figures--at about a 6 per cent reduction across the board--apply to the findings on which groups felt more tired than usual.

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[1] While Feldman, Sheatsley, and Bradburn note that the distinction between grief and anxiety is not clearly made in psychiatric literature, they attempt a distinction based on Engel, which I also follow here; see Bradburn, "Public Apathy," pp. 276-277 and Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 159, 171, also Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," p. 20. Unless otherwise specified, the statistic cited below appear in Table 2, Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 158.

Except for upset stomachs--in which no segment varied more than 8 per cent from the national average--race was as significant as partisanship in determining disparity in incidence of anxiety symptoms. While pro-Kennedy headaches hovered around the national average of 25 per cent and anti-Kennedy headaches ranged from 12-17 per cent, Negro headaches shot up to 43 per cent, nationally.[1] Similarly, rapid heart beat afflicted 44 per cent of the Negro sample while Kennedy partisans ranged no more than 4 per cent above the national average of 26 per cent, Kennedy opponents registering in the teens.[2]

2. The Race Factor Answers to attitude questions also show Negroes exhibiting a slight margin over other segments in personal sorrow and a considerable margin in worry plus a longer duration of these feelings.[3] Negroes expected more negative effects from the assassination on the civil rights movement, on the international situation, and on their own lives, jobs, and futures, and they worried more about these possible effects.[4] Negro children also mirrored the greater upset and worry of their parents.[5]

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[1] Except for an 18 per cent rise in Detroit Negro heart beats and a 25 per cent decrease in Washington white headaches, Bardburn and Feldman found no marked change in anxiety symptoms from the levels these groups recorded a month prior to the assassination. However, grief symptoms rose markedly, especially for Negroes, in contrast to the October findings. These authors feel that the decreases in white headaches (and also a 6 per cent decrease in black headaches) reflects the external focusing of emotion in grief rather than inward in anxiety; Bradburn, "Public Apathy," pp. 276-277.

[2] Negroes also continued to score at least 10 per cent higher than the national average on all these grief and anxiety items (except tiredness and upset stomachs) during the week after the assassination and a full 20 per cent higher on feeling on feeling nervous and tense; Sheatsley, p. 158.

[3] Greenberg, "Social Research," pp. 376-378; Sheatsley, "National Survey," pp. 155, 157, 160; Bradburn, "Public Apathy," pp. 276, 279-281.

[4] Seven weeks after the assassination, when white anxiety had decreased significantly, Negroes continued to feel personally less safe, to see hatred and prejudice exhibited in the assassination, and to see the nation as leaderless and filled with political unrest; Greenberg, "Social Research," pp. 377-378; Coleman, "Changes in Belief," p. 267 (Miller, p. 271).

[5] Sigel, "Television and Reactions of Schoolchildren," p. 210.

XUM

Although Greenberg and Parker in their summary tend to downplay the racial factor per se and to stress the similarity of Negro response to that of others who shared their political preference for Kennedy (eight out of ten Negroes had voted for Kennedy in 1960), most of the commentators in their separate articles point to a great attachment of Negroes as Negroes to Kennedy, not just because of his general political stance, but because of his being perceived to be beneficial to their own group. Miller and Zimmerman interpret their data as indicating that "Negroes more emotionally involved by the assassination and also felt more threatened by it."[1] Sigel contends that the worry and concern of Negro children were so much greater than that of white children because "Kennedy was intimately associated with the fate of the Negro."[2] Bradburn and Feldman explain that the "depth of the reaction, both personal and political, shown by the Negroes appears to be in large part a function of Kennedy's identification with the civil rights movement and of fear that his death might have negative consequences for it.[3] Although it would be quite possible for Negroes to feel hopeless about civil rights after Kennedy's death without having felt that hopeful about it while he lived, indications are that, although Kennedy was for a long time noncommittal about civil rights, he was perceived, while he lived, by the bulk of Negroes as committed to the cause and retrospectively he became for them something of a civil rights champion.[4] It is my contention that the strength and depth of Negro reaction to Kennedy's assassination, evidenced both in more somatic symptoms of grief and anxiety and in greater frequency of corresponding attitudes of sorrow and worry, contributed to their need to mythologize Kennedy more (e.g., as evidenced by the great frequency of Kennedy's picture, along with pictures of Jesus in more pious homes, on Negro walls).[1]

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[1] Miller, "Reactions in Manhattan," p. 271; Greenberg, "Social Research," p. 376.

[2] Sigel, "Television and Reactions of Schoolchildren," p. 211.

[3] Bradburn, "Public Apathy," pp. 276, 281.

[4] See Chapter VI, #6, above.

3. Sex, Party, and Class Factors Although I tend to isolate a distinctive Negro response, in light of the sparcity of multi-variate analyses, it is difficult on the basis of merely demographic description to explain which factors are most operative.[2] Research indicates that not only being black, but also being female, being Democratic,[3] or being lower class made one more prone than the opposite to grieve strongly for Kennedy--and on some indices, some of these characteristics or combinations of them are more potent than merely being black. Each of these groups exhibited more personal sorrow, with women especially, as may be characteristic of them during more normal times, exhibiting more crying, praying, and grief-stricken (as compared with cognitive or evaluative) activities.[4] Democrats and lower-class persons were more likely to share Negroes' worry about their own jobs and lives; Democrats also shared black worry about the future of the country and its international relations; and women shared the fear for personal safety. Lower-class folks tended to hold more extreme

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[1] See Chapter VIII, #3. Crucifixion/resurrection theory suggests that those brought most low by a leader's loss have the greatest need to exalt him. For distinctive Negro response to loss of Kennedy as imperator, see Chapter VII, #2B.

[2] I have taken over this qualifying assessment from Greenberg and Parker, "Social Research," p. 379. However, I do not agree with their argument that race cannot be an independent variable but must be reduced to factors such as education, income, and political preference.

[3] If political preference is measured not by party affiliation but in terms of how one voted in 1960 or, even more so, in terms of whether one thought Kennedy was doing a good job as President, it becomes a more potent factor in correlating with strong grief; Greenberg, "Social Research," pp. 366-378.

[4] Greenberg, "Social Research," p. 367.

vindictive opinions (as did blacks also) while upper class people, who tended to seek solitude less and to pray in churches more joined by women and Democrats in tending to assume collective responsibility for the assassination.

4. Regional, Educational, Density, and Other Factors The 1968 Harris survey of reactions to several assassinations may be less accurate in requiring a longer period of recall of reactions to John Kennedy's assassination, but its data is helpfully analyzed into more multi-variate patterns, and its results seem to be generally in accord with the more immediate surveys. In this survey, 95 per cent answered that they were sad (rather than relieved) over Kennedy's death, with 97 per cent of Easterners and of metropolitan area dwellers being sad and all groups being low in those feeling relieved.[1] Virtually all those who did not finish high school, who were white females high in political activity, or who were white Easterners answered that they were extremely saddened. Non-whites as a whole (87 per cent) did not vary significantly from whites (86 per cent) in extreme sadness. The smallest group to mark the extreme sadness category (67 per cent) was comprised of highly politically active white Southerners, much of whose activity was directed, in contrast to most other political actives, in opposition to the federal government because of their commitment to maintain segregation, the Harris analysts explain.[2] Of the national Harris sample, 87 per cent indicated that they were "at a loss" over the assassination (rather than not affected) with 96 per cent of Negroes, and even more of the non-college high school graduates among them, and

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[1] This and the following data come from an October 1968 Harris survey of 1176 respondents reported in Kirkham, Assassination, p. 238.

[2] Ibid., pp. 108-109. Ordinarily, high political activity was correlated with greater grief. This 67% figure is not far from the NORC finding of 62% of 62% of Southern anti-Kennedy people who felt the loss of Kennedy as "someone close and dear;" Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 167.

91 per cent of those living in metropolitan areas feeling at a loss; groups least likely to be extremely at a loss were again Southerners and also Westerners, among whom, the analysts explain, Kennedy had encountered the greatest opposition in 1960. Those not affected were very few--with 6 per cent of the urban town dwellers and also of those low in political activity being the largest examples. Nationally, 78 per cent said they felt hopeless over the assassination, topped by 91 per cent of the Negroes and 86 per cent of suburbanites, with 11 per cent of rural dwellers and 7 per cent of Southerners feeling hopeful.

Only on the fear and anger scales does the minority viewpoint exceed 4 per cent nationally--with 17 per cent of the total sample feeling unafraid and 13 per cent feeling calm compared with 61 per cent feeling afraid and 75 per cent feeling angry. Statistics on shock, as well as fear and anger, are consonant with the findings on sadness, disorientation, and hopelessness. In general, the stronger incidences of all these negative emotions, which we have lumped together somatically as grief (and anxiety) and attitudinally as sorrow (and worry), seem to occur among urban, Negro, Eastern, female, non-college, high in political activity while those least affected were non-urban, Southern and Wsetern, and low in political activity, a composite not very different from that obtained from looking at the immediate surveys' data. Putting the two together--and adding results of very limited-sample surveys reported below, which suggests that Catholics were more deeply affected than Protestants--I would surmise that the person most likely to grieve heavily for Kennedy would be a politically active, urban, Eastern, non-college, lower class, Democratic, black Catholic female.

5. The Religious Factor Two college-age surveys with small samples, one in Boulder, Colorado (315 respondents) and in in Connecticut (132 respon-

dents), suggest that--with race, class, region, and population density factors being largely constant (as well as age and education), or at least not taken into account--being female made more for grieving over Kennedy than did being pro-Kennedy, Democratic, or Catholic, though these factors, in descending order, also helped. In contrast to an average of 62 per cent, 80 per cent of the females in the Boulder study were extremely upset by the assassination, topping even the 75 per cent incidence of extreme upset among pro-Kennedy people and moving way ahead of the 56 per cent of the males and the 45 per cent of the anti-Kennedy people who were extremely upset. Not only were 90 per cent of the Democratic females extremely upset, but so were 72 per cent of the Republican females while male Democrats scored below average at 59 per cent and male Republicans even lower at 52 percent.[1] In Connecticut, female Democrats at 86 per cent again topped the list of "non-closers," those who in January 1964 as well as November 1963 found it hard to believe Kennedy dead--which Pratt takes as a grief index--followed by Catholic females at 77 per cent and Protestant females at 70 per cent. Among females, only the Republicans scored under the average of 58 per cent, registering at 53 per cent, which fairly well matched the response of Democratic males. Catholic males at 47 per cent trailed a little while Protestant males at 30 per cent and Republican males at 26 per cent fell far behind on the non-closure index.[2]

6. The Age Factor Age is not a factor in many of the studies, and its effects are not consistent in any cumulative, straight-line way, e.g.,

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[1] Feshbach, "Personality and Political Values," p. 292.

[2] Pratt, "Patterns of Closure," pp. 184-189. On the relation of closure to grief and recovery, see Chapter IX, #1, above. Especially since Kennedy's religion was such an issue in the 1960 election, it seems odd that religion was included so seldom as a variable in surveys.

greater grief correlating with advancing age. In the 1968 Harris survey, those over sixty-five were most likely to be calm and unafraid and those under thirty were the most afraid, yet those over sixty-five were also among the most shocked.[1] Although Greenberg and Parker find little to distinguish the emotions, feelings, and behaviour of young adults from those of older adults, I think the focus of many young adults' political energies on Kennedy and their identification with him did affect the quality of their grieving and consequently of their memorialization of him; Kennedy served as an embodied and then disembodied ego ideal for many in a formative stage of the development of their life values and political commitments.[2]

Among children, the age factor in relation to the amount of grief is much clearer. In studying the reports of parents about the reactions of their children aged four to twelve,, Sheatsley and Feldman found only 39 per cent of the preschoolers, but 72 per cent of the six-to-nine age group and 85 per cent of the ten-to-twelve age group, were described as very or somewhat upset, averaging out to 68 per cent for that age range as a whole.[3] Taking a partially overlapping but largely older group of children ranging from grades four to twelve (roughly ages nine through seventeen), Sigel found children expressing basically the same attitudes and exhibiting the same symptoms to the same degree as adults--though children reported crying less (presumably because more ashamed of it); this finding does not signally contradict what Sheatsley and Feldman found on the basis of parental reports, as Sigel charges, but corroborates their presumption that teenagers, who did not figure in their study, would react in much the same manner as adults.[4]

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[1] Kirkham, Assassination, pp. 94-98.   [2] See Chapter VII, #2D & #3E.

[3] Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 161.

[4] Ibid., p. 160; Sigel, "Television and Schoolchildren," p. 206.

XUM

Character, sex, and race (as well as timing) were used to explain variations within age groups. Though Sigel and Greensparg found only about a third of the children studied feeling immediately sad at the news of Kennedy's being shot or being dead, Sigel's other findings suggest that children, like adults, grew more sad, perhaps, as we have stylized it, mainly in the disorganization phase. However, Ginsparg suggests that neither age nor stage of reaction by themselves, but also children's character influenced their proneness to grieve. She clusters the teenagers with active impulses into vengeful, intellectual, and helpful groups, roughly on the basis of the dominant motif of their responses to the Kennedy assassination being warding off, facing, or recovering from the loss. In her small-sampled, qualitative study, she found that boys comprised the whole intellectual group bent on understanding the assassination, most of those who prayed, and most of those who felt overcome emotionally, suggesting a more intense identification with Kennedy and greater grief among boys. Sigel, on the other hand, in her quantitative study, found girls--and most especially Negro girls--more emotionally affected than boys, and she found children of Democratic households more upset than those from Republican households.[1]

Young adolescents seem to have been hardest hit by the assassination. Although Sheatsley and Feldman found only 15 per cent of parents reporting their children still upset a week after the assassination, Wolfenstein found essays of young adolescents about their memories of President Kennedy's death to be moving documents in which strong emotional reactions of grief still contending with incredulity were expressed.[2] It is her theory that young adolescents, old enough to be attached to the President but too young to mourn completely, experienced Kennedy's loss most acutely, both in terms of intensity, which rises from latency to pre-puberty to adolescence, and in terms of duration, which rises likewise but then declines as one proceeds into adulthood. Unlike young children, who had little attachment to Kennedy and little grief, and also unlike adults, who became more readily reconciled to the loss, the task of giving up a loved and admired leader was made more painful and drawn out more for young adolescents because it coincided with the basic unresolved task of their time of life, that of giving up their childhood attachment to their parents.[1]

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[1] Ginsparg, "Young Teen-ager's Responses," pp. 29, 8; Sigel, "School Children's Reactions," pp. 49, 59.

[2] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, p. 74; Sheatsley, "National Survey," p. 161. See Chapter IX, #1, above.

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[1] Wolfenstein, Children and Death, pp. 86-87; see Chapter VII, #2D.

ERRATA

Page/Line	Mistake and Correction
4:3n	Substitute 1963 for 1953.
33:4n	Substitute #5 for #7.
67:22	Change "Q" in "Quoting" from capital to lower case.
75:6n	Substitute "rather" for "less."
90:2	Add an "s" to "word."
123:1	Change "m" to "n" in "politician."
135:12	Change from double to single quotation marks around "liberals."
156:2	Change from double to single quotation marks around "unAmerican."
156:23	Add a quotation mark after "change."
163:19	Substitute "Kazin" for "Kaz."
166:4n	Substitute 4 for 2 as the footnote number.
200:2n	Add a quotation mark after the final parenthesis.
218:17	Reverse the "r" and "i" in "thirteen."
247:23	Change "s" to "c" in "custom."
249:5	Add an "r" to "foreign."
257:15	Complete "interested in" in the blank space.
276:34	Add 2 as a footnote reference number following the elipse marks.
291:23	Underline "Days."
306:7	Complete "through the disorganizing" in the blank space.
381:1	Add an "s" to "word."
411:2n	Underline "Kennedy and American Catholicism."
420:3n	Add an "r" to "Fraser."
431:1n	Remove quotation mark before "Julius."
446:28	Add 4 as a footnote reference number following "eyes."

XUM

LIST OF EPIGRAPHS

Chapter	Source
Intro.	Clinton Rossiter, *American Presidency*, pp. 102, 87, 103.
I	Ray Price cited by Novak, *Choosing Our King*, p. 45.
II	Arthur Schlesinger cited by Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, p. 92.
III	John Bright cited by Rossiter, *American Presidency*, p. 13.
IV	Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loew, "Camelot," cited by Manchester, *Death*, p. 29.
V	Wilbert Snow cited by Knight, *Death of J. K.*, p. 19.
VI	Henry Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, p. 215.
VII	Harrison Salisbury, "Introduction" to the *Warren Report*, p. xvii, cited by Knight, *Death of J. K.*, p. 1.
VIII	Myron LeVoy, "Out of the West of Lucky Riders," in *Of Poetry and Power*, pp. 54-55.
IX	Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Assassination of John F. Kennedy," in *Of Poetry and Power*, p. 22.
Concl.	Robert Hazel, "The Post-Christian Era: An Oration," in *Of Poetry and Power*, p. 67.

XUM

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